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THE
TEMPLE
CLASSICS

Edited by
ISRAEL
GOLLANCZ
M.A.

First Edition, January 1897
Second Edition, February 1898

LE MORTE DARTHUR

BY SIR THOMAS MALORY

PART THE *first*

MDCCCXCVII · PUBLISHED · BY · J · M · DENT · AND · CO : ALDINE · HOUSE · LONDON

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LE MORTE DARTHUR

BOOK I

CHAPTER I. How Uther Pendragon sent for the duke of Cornwall and Igraine his wife, and of their departing suddenly again.

Duke of Tintagel and Igraine come to King Uthur

It befell in the days of Uther Pendragon, when he was king of all England, and so reigned, that there was a mighty duke in Cornwall that held war against him long time. And the duke was called the duke of Tintagil. And so by means King Uther sent for this duke, charging him to bring his wife with him, for she was called a fair lady, and a passing wise, and her name was called Igraine. So when the duke and his wife were come unto the king, by the means of great lords they were accorded both: the king liked and loved this lady well, and he made them great cheer out of measure, and desired to have lain by her. But she was a passing good woman, and would not assent unto the king. And then she told the duke her husband, and said, I suppose that we were sent for that I should be dishonoured, wherefore, husband, I counsel you, that we depart from hence suddenly, that we may ride all night unto our own castle. And in like wise as she said so they departed, that neither the king nor none of his council were ware of their departing. All so soon as King Uther knew of their

They depart in haste

departing so suddenly, he was wonderly wroth. Then he called to him his privy council, and told them of the sudden departing of the duke and his wife. Then they asked the king to send for the duke and his wife by a great charge; And if he will not come at your summons, then may ye do your best, then have ye cause to make mighty war upon him. So that was done, and the messengers had their answers, and that was this shortly, that neither he nor his wife would not come at him. Then was the king wonderly wroth. And then the king sent him plain word again, and bade him be ready and stuff him and garnish him, for within forty days he would fetch him out of the biggest castle that he had. When the duke had this warning, anon he went and furnished and garnished two strong castles of his, of the which the one hight Tintagil, and the other castle hight Terrabil. So his wife Dame Igraine he put in the castle of Tintagil, and himself he put in the castle of Terrabil, the which had many issues and posterns out. Then in all haste came Uther with a great host, and laid a siege about the castle of Terrabil. And there he pight many pavilions, and there was great war made on both parties, and much people slain. Then for pure anger and for great love of fair Igraine the King Uther fell sick. So came to the King Uther, Sir Ulfius a noble knight, and asked the king why he was sick. I shall tell thee, said the king, I am sick for anger and for love of fair Igraine that I may not be whole. Well, my lord, said Sir Ulfius, I

shall seek Merlin, and he shall do you remedy, that your heart shall be pleased. So Ulfius departed, and by adventure he met Merlin in a beggar's array, and then Merlin asked Ulfius whom he sought. And he said he had little ado to tell him. Well, said Merlin, I know whom thou seekest, for thou seekest Merlin; therefore seek no farther, for I am he, and if King Uther will well reward me, and be sworn unto me to fulfil my desire, that shall be his honour and profit more than mine, for I shall cause him to have all his desire. All this will I undertake, said Ulfius, that there shall be nothing reasonable but thou shalt have thy desire. Well, said Merlin, he shall have his entente and desire. And therefore, said Merlin, ride on your way, for I will not be long behind.

Merlin helps Uther to his desire

CHAPTER II. How Uther Pendragon made war on the duke of Cornwall, and how by the means of Merlin he lay by the duchess and gat Arthur. Then Ulfius was glad, and rode on more than a pace till that he came to King Uther Pendragon, and told him he had met with Merlin. Where is he? said the king. Sir, said Ulfius, he will not dwell long; therewithal Ulfius was ware where Merlin stood at the porch of the pavilion's door. And then Merlin was bound to come to the king. When King Uther saw him, he said he was welcome. Sir, said Merlin, I know all your heart every deal; so ye will be sworn unto me as ye be a true king anointed, to fulfil my desire, ye shall have your desire.

Merlin's conditions

Then the king was sworn upon the four Evangelists. Sir, said Merlin, this is my desire: the first night that ye shall lie by Igraine ye shall get a child on her, and when that is born, that it shall be delivered to me for to nourish there as I will have it; for it shall be your worship, and the child's avail as mickle as the child is worth. I will well, said the king, as thou wilt have it. Now make you ready, said Merlin, this night ye shall lie with Igraine in the castle of Tintagil, and ye shall be like the duke her husband, Ulfius shall be like Sir Brastias, a knight of the duke's, and I will be like a knight that hight Sir Jordans, a knight of the duke's. But wait ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but say ye are diseased, and so hie you to bed, and rise not on the morn till I come to you, for the castle of Tintagil is but ten miles hence; so this was done as they devised. But the duke of Tintagil espied how the king rode from the siege of Terrabil, and therefore that night he issued out of the castle at a postern for to have distressed the king's host. And so, through his own issue, the duke himself was slain or-ever the king came at the castle of Tintagil. So after the death of the duke, King Uther lay with Igraine more than three hours after his death, and begat on her that night Arthur, and or day came Merlin came to the king, and bade him make him ready, and so he kissed the lady Igraine and departed in all haste. But when the lady heard tell of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dead or-ever

King Uther and Igraine marry

King Uther came to her; then she marvelled who that might be that lay with her in likeness of her lord; so she mourned privily and held her peace. Then all the barons by one assent prayed the king of accord betwixt the lady Igraine and him; the king gave them leave, for fain would he have been accorded with her. So the king put all the trust in Ulfius to entreat between them, so by the entreaty at the last the king and she met together. Now will we do well, said Ulfius, our king is a lusty knight and wifeless, and my lady Igraine is a passing fair lady; it were great joy unto us all, an it might please the king to make her his queen. Unto that they all well accorded and moved it to the king. And anon, like a lusty knight, he assented thereto with good will, and so in all haste they were married in a morning with great mirth and joy. And King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney then wedded Margawse that was Gawaine's mother, and King Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elaine. All this was done at the request of King Uther. And the third sister Morgan le Fay was put to school in a nunnery, and there she learned so much that she was a great clerk of necromancy, and after she was wedded to King Uriens of the land of Gore, that was Sir Ewain's le Blanchemain's father.

CHAPTER III. Of the birth of King Arthur and of his nurture. Then Queen Igraine waxed daily greater and greater, so it befell after within half a year, as King Uther lay by

Merlin claims the child

his queen, he asked her, by the faith she owed to him, whose was the child within her body; then was she sore abashed to give answer. Dismay you not, said the king, but tell me the truth, and I shall love you the better, by the faith of my body. Sir, said she, I shall tell you the truth. The same night that my lord was dead, the hour of his death, as his knights record, there came into my castle of Tintagil a man like my lord in speech and in countenance, and two knights with him in likeness of his two knights Brastias and Jordans, and so I went unto bed with him as I ought to do with my lord, and the same night, as I shall answer unto God, this child was begotten upon me. That is truth, said the king, as ye say; for it was I myself that came in the likeness, and therefore dismay you not, for I am father of the child; and there he told her all the cause, how it was by Merlin's counsel. Then the queen made great joy when she knew who was the father of her child. Soon came Merlin unto the king, and said, Sir, ye must purvey you for the nourishing of your child. As thou wilt, said the king, be it. Well, said Merlin, I know a lord of yours in this land, that is a passing true man and a faithful, and he shall have the nourishing of your child, and his name is Sir Ector, and he is a lord of fair livelihood in many parts in England and Wales; and this lord, Sir Ector, let him be sent for, for to come and speak with you, and desire him yourself, as he loveth you, that he will put his own child to nourishing to another woman, and that his wife nourish yours. And when the

child is born let it be delivered to me at yonder privy postern unchristened. So like as Merlin devised it was done. And when Sir Ector was come he made fiaunce to the king for to nourish the child like as the king desired; and there the king granted Sir Ector great rewards. Then when the lady was delivered, the king commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child, bound in a cloth of gold, and that ye deliver him to what poor man ye meet at the postern gate of the castle. So the child was delivered unto Merlin, and so he bare it forth unto Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur; and so Sir Ector's wife nourished him with her own pap.

Birth of Arthur

CHAPTER IV. Of the death of King Uther Pendragon. Then within two years King Uther fell sick of a great malady. And in the meanwhile his enemies usurped upon him, and did a great battle upon his men, and slew many of his people. Sir, said Merlin, ye may not lie so as ye do, for ye must to the field though ye ride on an horse litter: for ye shall never have the better of your enemies but if your person be there, and then shall ye have the victory. So it was done as Merlin had devised, and they carried the king forth in an horse-litter with a great host towards his enemies. And at St. Albans there met with the king a great host of the North. And that day Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias did great deeds of arms, and King Uther's men overcame the Northern battle and slew many people, and put the remnant to flight.

King Uther dies

And then the king returned unto London, and made great joy of his victory. And then he fell passing sore sick, so that three days and three nights he was speechless: wherefore all the barons made great sorrow, and asked Merlin what counsel were best. There is none other remedy, said Merlin, but God will have his will. But look ye, all barons, be before King Uther to-morn, and God and I shall make him to speak. So on the morn all the barons with Merlin came before the king; then Merlin said aloud unto King Uther, Sir, shall your son Arthur be king after your days, of this realm with all the appurtenance? Then Uther Pendragon turned him, and said in hearing of them all, I give him God's blessing and mine, and bid him pray for my soul, and righteously and worshipfully that he claim the crown upon forfeiture of my blessing; and therewith he yielded up the ghost, and then was he interred as longed to a king. Wherefore the queen, fair Igraine, made great sorrow, and all the barons.

CHAPTER V. How Arthur was chosen king, and of wonders and marvels of a sword taken out of a stone by the said Arthur. Then stood the realm in great jeopardy long while, for every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many weened to have been king. Then Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and counselled him for to send for all the lords of the realm, and all the gentlemen of arms, that they should to London come by Christmas,

The sword and the stone

upon pain of cursing; and for this cause, that Jesus, that was born on that night, that he would of his great mercy show some miracle, as he was come to be king of mankind, for to show some miracle who should be rightwise king of this realm. So the Archbishop, by the advice of Merlin, sent for all the lords and gentlemen of arms that they should come by Christmas even unto London. And many of them made them clean of their life, that their prayer might be the more acceptable unto God. So in the greatest church of London, whether it were Paul's or not the French book maketh no mention, all the estates were long or day in the church for to pray. And when matins and the first mass was done, there was seen in the churchyard, against the high altar, a great stone four square, like unto a marble stone, and in midst thereof was like an anvil of steel a foot on high, and therein stuck a fair sword naked by the point, and letters there were written in gold about the sword that said thus:—Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England. Then the people marvelled, and told it to the Archbishop. I command, said the Archbishop, that ye keep you within your church, and pray unto God still; that no man touch the sword till the high mass be all done. So when all masses were done all the lords went to behold the stone and the sword. And when they saw the scripture, some assayed; such as would have been king. But none might stir the sword nor move it. He is not here, said the Archbishop, that

The trial for the sword

shall achieve the sword, but doubt not God will make him known. But this is my counsel, said the Archbishop, that we let purvey ten knights, men of good fame, and they to keep this sword. So it was ordained, and then there was made a cry, that every man should essay that would, for to win the sword. And upon New Year's Day the barons let make a jousts and a tournament, that all knights that would joust or tourney there might play, and all this was ordained for to keep the lords and the commons together, for the Archbishop trusted that God would make him known that should win the sword So upon New Year's Day, when the service was done, the barons rode unto the field, some to joust and some to tourney, and so it happened that Sir Ector, that had great livelihood about London, rode unto the jousts, and with him rode Sir Kay his son, and young Arthur that was his nourished brother; and Sir Kay was made knight at All Hallowmass afore. So as they rode to the jousts-ward, Sir Kay had lost his sword, for he had left it at his father's lodging, and so he prayed young Arthur for to ride for his sword. I will well, said Arthur, and rode fast after the sword, and when he came home, the lady and all were out to see the jousting. Then was Arthur wroth, and said to himself, I will ride to the churchyard, and take the sword with me that sticketh in the stone, for my brother Sir Kay shall not be without a sword this day. So when he came to the churchyard, Sir Arthur alit and tied his horse to the stile, and so he went to

the tent, and found no knights there, for they were at jousting; and so he handled the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode his way until he came to his brother Sir Kay, and delivered him the sword. And as soon as Sir Kay saw the sword, he wist well it was the sword of the stone, and so he rode to his father Sir Ector, and said: Sir, lo here is the sword of the stone, wherefore I must be king of this land. When Sir Ector beheld the sword, he returned again and came to the church, and there they alit all three, and went into the church. And anon he made Sir Kay to swear upon a book how he came to that sword. Sir, said Sir Kay, by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me. How gat ye this sword? said Sir Ector to Arthur. Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother's sword, I found nobody at home to deliver me his sword, and so I thought my brother Sir Kay should not be swordless, and so I came hither eagerly and pulled it out of the stone without any pain. Found ye any knights about this sword? said Sir Ector. Nay, said Arthur. Now, said Sir Ector to Arthur, I understand ye must be king of this land. Wherefore I, said Arthur, and for what cause? Sir, said Ector, for God will have it so, for there should never man have drawn out this sword, but he that shall be rightways king of this land. Now let me see whether ye can put the sword there as it was, and pull it out again. That is no mastery, said Arthur,

Arthur takes the sword

Arthur pulls out the sword several times

and so he put it in the stone, therewithal Sir Ector essayed to pull out the sword and failed.

CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur pulled out the sword divers times. Now assay, said Sir Ector unto Sir Kay. And anon he pulled at the sword with all his might, but it would not be. Now shall ye essay, said Sir Ector to Arthur. I will well, said Arthur, and pulled it out easily. And therewithal Sir Ector knelt down to the earth, and Sir Kay. Alas, said Arthur, my own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me? Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so, I was never your father nor of your blood, but I wot well ye are of an higher blood than I weened ye were. And then Sir Ector told him all, how he was betaken him for to nourish him, and by whose commandment, and by Merlin's deliverance. Then Arthur made great dole when he understood that Sir Ector was not his father. Sir, said Ector unto Arthur, will ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are king? Else were I to blame, said Arthur, for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholden to, and my good lady and mother your wife, that as well as her own hath fostered me and kept. And if ever it be God's will that I be king as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you, God forbid I should fail you. Sir, said Sir Ector, I will ask no more of you, but that ye will make my son, your foster brother, Sir Kay, seneschal of all your lands. That shall be done, said

Arthur, and more, by the faith of my body, that never man shall have that office but he, while he and I live. Therewithal they went unto the Archbishop, and told him how the sword was achieved, and by whom; and on Twelfth-day all the barons came thither, and to essay to take the sword, who that would essay. But there afore them all, there might none take it out but Arthur; wherefore there were many lords wroth, and said it was great shame unto them all and the realm, to be overgoverned with a boy of no high blood born, and so they fell out at that time that it was put off till Candlemas, and then all the barons should meet there again; but always the ten knights were ordained to watch the sword day and night, and so they set a pavilion over the stone and the sword, and five always watched. So at Candlemas many more great lords came thither for to have won the sword, but there might none prevail. And right as Arthur did at Christmas, he did at Candlemas, and pulled out the sword easily, whereof the barons were sore aggrieved and put it off in delay till the high feast of Easter. And as Arthur sped before, so did he at Easter, yet there were some of the great lords had indignation that Arthur should be king, and put it off in a delay till the feast of Pentecost. Then the Archbishop of Canterbury by Merlin's providence let purvey then of the best knights that they might get, and such knights as Uther Pendragon loved best and most trusted in his days. And such knights were put about

The barons wroth thereat

Arthur chosen king

Arthur as Sir Baudwin of Britain, Sir Kay, Sir Ulfius, Sir Brastias. All these with many other, were always about Arthur, day and night, till the feast of Pentecost.

CHAPTER VII. How King Arthur was crowned, and how he made officers. And at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men essayed to pull at the sword that would essay, but none might prevail but Arthur, and pulled it out afore all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the commons cried at once, We will have Arthur unto our king, we will put him no more in delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and who that holdeth against it, we will slay him. And therewith they all kneeled at once, both rich and poor, and cried Arthur mercy because they had delayed him so long, and Arthur forgave them, and took the sword between both his hands, and offered it upon the altar where the Archbishop was, and so was he made knight of the best man that was there. And so anon was the coronation made. And there was he sworn unto his lords and the commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from thenceforth the days of this life. Also then he made all lords that held of the crown to come in, and to do service as they ought to do. And many complaints were made unto Sir Arthur of great wrongs that were done since the death of King Uther, of many lands that were bereaved lords, knights, ladies, and gentlemen. Wherefore King Arthur made the lands to be given

again unto them that owned them. When this was done, that the king had stablished all the countries about London, then he let make Sir Kay seneschal of England; and Sir Baudwin of Britain was made constable; and Sir Ulfius was made chamberlain; and Sir Brastias was made warden to wait upon the north from Trent forwards, for it was that time the most party the king's enemies. But within few years after, Arthur won all the north, Scotland, and all that were under their obeissance. Also Wales, a part of it held against Arthur, but he overcame them all, as he did the remnant, through the noble prowess of himself and his knights of the Round Table.

and crowned

CHAPTER VIII. How King Arthur held in Wales, at a Pentecost, a great feast, and what kings and lords came to his feast. Then the king removed into Wales, and let cry a great feast that it should be holden at Pentecost after the incoronation of him at the city of Carlion. Unto the feast came King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney, with five hundred knights with him. Also there came to the feast King Uriens of Gore with four hundred knights with him. Also there came to that feast King Nentres of Garlot, with seven hundred knights with him. Also there came to the feast the king of Scotland with six hundred knights with him, and he was but a young man. Also there came to the feast a king that was called the king with the hundred knights, but he and his men were passing well beseen at all points. Also there came the king of Carados with five hundred knights. And King Arthur

Arthur holds a great feast

was glad of their coming, for he weened that all the kings and knights had come for great love, and to have done him worship at his feast, wherefore the king made great joy, and sent the kings and knights great presents. But the kings would none receive, but rebuked the messengers shamefully, and said they had no joy to receive no gifts of a beardless boy that was come of low blood, and sent him word they would none of his gifts, but that they were come to give him gifts with hard swords betwixt the neck and the shoulders: and therefore they came thither, so they told to the messengers plainly, for it was great shame to all them to see such a boy to have a rule of so noble a realm as this land was. With this answer the messengers departed and told to King Arthur this answer. Wherefore, by the advice of his barons, he took him to a strong tower with five hundred good men with him: and all the kings aforesaid in a manner laid a siege tofore him, but King Arthur was well victualed. And within fifteen days there came Merlin among them into the city of Carlion. Then all the kings were passing glad of Merlin, and asked him, For what cause is that boy Arthur made your king? Sirs, said Merlin, I shall tell you the cause, for he is King Uther Pendragon's son, born in wedlock, gotten on Igraine, the duke's wife of Tintagil. Then is he a bastard, they said all. Nay, said Merlin, after the death of the duke, more than three hours, was Arthur begotten, and thirteen days after King Uther wedded Igraine; and there-

fore I prove him he is no bastard, and who saith nay, he shall be king and overcome all his enemies; and, or he die, he shall be long king of all England, and have under his obeissance Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and more realms than I will now rehearse. Some of the kings had marvel of Merlin's words, and deemed well that it should be as he said; and some of them laughed him to scorn, as King Lot; and more other called him a witch. But then were they accorded with Merlin, that King Arthur should come out and speak with the kings, and to come safe and to go safe, such assurance there was made. So Merlin went unto King Arthur, and told him how he had done, and bade him fear not, but come out boldly and speak with them, and spare them not, but answer them as their king and chieftain, for ye shall overcome them all, whether they will or nill.

Arthur's right to be king questioned

CHAPTER IX. Of the first war that King Arthur had, and how he won the field.

Then King Arthur came out of his tower, and had under his gown a jesseraunt of double mail, and there went with him the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Baudwin of Britain, and Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias: these were the men of most worship that were with him. And when they were met there was no meekness, but stout words on both sides; but always King Arthur answered them, and he said would make them to bow an he lived. Wherefore they departed with wrath, and King Arthur bade keep them well, and they bade the king keep him well. So the king returned him

Arthur at war with the kings

to the tower again and armed him and all his knights. What will ye do? said Merlin to the kings; ye were better for to stint, for ye shall not here prevail though ye were ten times so many. Be we well advised to be afeared of a dream-reader? said King Lot. With that Merlin vanished away, and came to King Arthur, and bade him set on them fiercely; and in the meanwhile there were three hundred good men of the best that were with the kings, that went straight unto King Arthur and that comforted him greatly. Sir, said Merlin to Arthur, fight not with the sword that ye had by miracle, till that ye see ye go unto the worse, then draw it out and do your best. So forthwithal King Arthur set upon them in their lodging. And Sir Baudwin, Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias slew on the right hand and on the left hand that it was marvel; and always King Arthur on horseback laid on with a sword, and did marvellous deeds of arms that many of the kings had great joy of his deeds and hardiness. Then King Lot brake out on the back side, and the king with the hundred knights, and King Carados, and set on Arthur fiercely behind him. With that Sir Arthur turned with his knights, and smote behind and before, and ever Sir Arthur was in the foremost press till his horse was slain underneath him. And therewith King Lot smote down King Arthur. With that his four knights received him and set him on horseback. Then he drew his sword Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies' eyes, that it gave light like thirty

torches. And therewith he put them on back, and slew much people. And then the commons of Carlion arose with clubs and staves and slew many knights; but all the kings held them together with their knights that were left alive, and so fled and departed. And Merlin came unto Arthur, and counselled him to follow them no further.

Merlin's counsel

CHAPTER X. How Merlin counselled King Arthur to send for King Ban and King Bors, and of their counsel taken for the war. So after the feast and journey, King Arthur drew him unto London, and so by the counsel of Merlin, the king let call his barons to council, for Merlin had told the king that the six kings that made war upon him would in all haste be awroke on him and on his lands. Wherefore the king asked counsel at them all. They could no counsel give, but said they were big enough. Ye say well, said Arthur; I thank you for your good courage, but will ye all that loveth me speak with Merlin? ye know well that he hath done much for me, and he knoweth many things, and when he is afore you, I would that ye prayed him heartily of his best advice. All the barons said they would pray him and desire him. So Merlin was sent for, and fair desired of all the barons to give them best counsel. I shall say you, said Merlin, I warn you all, your enemies are passing strong for you, and they are good men of arms as be alive, and by this time they have gotten to them four kings more and a mighty

Kings Ban and Bors asked for help

duke; and unless that our king have more chivalry with him than he may make within the bounds of his own realm, an he fight with them in battle, he shall be overcome and slain. What were best to do in this cause? said all the barons. I shall tell you, said Merlin, my advice; there are two brethren beyond the sea, and they be kings both and marvellous good men of their hands; and that one hight King Ban of Benwick, and that other hight King Bors of Gaul, that is France. And on these two kings warreth a mighty man of men, the King Claudas, and striveth with them for a castle, and great war is betwixt them: but this Claudas is so mighty of goods whereof he getteth good knights, that he putteth these two kings most part to the worse; wherefore this is my counsel, that our king and sovereign lord send unto the kings Ban and Bors by two trusty knights with letters well devised, that if they will come and see King Arthur and his court, and so help him in his wars, that he will be sworn unto them to help them in their wars against King Claudas. Now, what say ye unto this counsel? said Merlin. This is well counselled, said the king and all the barons. Right so in all haste there were ordained to go two knights on the message unto the two kings. So were there made letters in the pleasant wise according unto King Arthur's desire. Ulfius and Brastias were made the messengers, and so rode forth well horsed and well armed, and as the guise was that time, and so passed the sea and rode toward the city of Benwick. And there besides were eight knights

that espied them, and at a straight passage they met with Ulfius and Brastias, and would have taken them prisoners; so they prayed them that they might pass, for they were messengers unto King Ban and Bors sent from King Arthur. Therefore, said the eight knights, ye shall die or be prisoners, for we be knights of King Claudas. And therewith two of them dressed their spears, and Ulfius and Brastias dressed their spears, and ran together with great raundon, and Claudas' knights brake their spears, and theirs to-held and bare the two knights out of their saddles to the earth, and so left them lying, and rode their ways. And the other six knights rode afore to a passage to meet with them again, and so Ulfius and Brastias smote other two down, and so passed on their ways. And at the fourth passage there met two for two, and both were laid unto the earth; so there was none of the eight knights but he was sore hurt or bruised. And when they come to Benwick it fortuned there were both Kings Ban and Bors. And when it was told the kings that there were come messengers, there were sent unto them two knights of worship, the one hight Lionses, lord of the country of Payarne, and Sir Phariance a worshipful knight. Anon they asked from whence they came, and they said from King Arthur, king of England; so they took them in their arms and made great joy each of other. But anon, as the two kings wist they were messengers of Arthur's, there was made no tarrying, but forthwith they spake with the knights, and welcomed them in the faithfullest

Ulfius and Brastias meet with hostile knights

Arthur goes to meet Kings Ban and Bors

wise, and said they were most welcome unto them before all the kings living. And therewith they kissed the letters and delivered them; and when Ban and Bors understood the letters, then they were more welcome than they were before. And after the haste of the letters, they gave them this answer, that they would fulfil the desire of King Arthur's writing, and Ulfius and Brastias tarry there as long as they would, they should have such cheer as might be made them in those marches. Then Ulfius and Brastias told the king of the adventure at their passages of the eight knights. Ha! ah! said Ban and Bors, they were my good friends. I would I had wist of them, they should not have escaped so. So Ulfius and Brastias had good cheer and great gifts as much as they might bear away, and had their answer by mouth and by writing, that those two kings would come unto Arthur in all the haste that they might. So the two knights rode on afore, and passed the sea, and come to their lord, and told him how they had sped, whereof King Arthur was passing glad. At what time suppose ye the two kings will be here? Sir, said they, afore All Hallowmass. Then the king let purvey for a great feast, and let cry a great jousts. And by All Hallowmass the two kings were come over the sea with three hundred knights well arrayed both for the peace and for the war. And King Arthur met with them ten mile out of London, and there was great joy as could be thought or made. And on All Hallowmass at the great feast, sat in the hall the three kings, and Sir Kay seneschal

served in the hall, and Sir Lucas the butler, that was Duke Corneus' son, and Sir Griflet, that was the son of Cardol, these three knights had the rule of all the service that served the kings. And anon, as they had washen and risen, all knights that would joust made them ready. By when they were ready on horseback there were seven hundred knights. And Arthur, Ban, and Bors, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Ector, Kay's father, they were in a place covered with cloth of gold like an hall, with ladies and gentlewomen, for to behold who did best, and thereon to give judgment.

Arthur holds a great tournament

CHAPTER XI. Of a great tourney made by King Arthur and the two kings Ban and Bors, and how they went over the sea.

And King Arthur and the two kings let depart the seven hundred knights in two parties. And there were three hundred knights of the realm of Benwick and of Gaul turned on the other side. Then they dressed their shields, and began to couch their spears many good knights. So Griflet was the first that met with a knight, one Ladinas, and they met so eagerly that all men had wonder; and they so fought that their shields fell to pieces, and horse and man fell to the earth; and both the French knight and the English knight lay so long that all men weened they had been dead. When Lucas the butler saw Griflet so lie, he horsed him again anon, and they two did marvellous deeds of arms with many bachelors. Also Sir Kay came out of an embushment with five knights with him, and

The jousting

they six smote other six down. But Sir Kay did that day marvellous deeds of arms that there was none did so well as he that day. Then there come Ladinas and Gracian, two knights of France, and did passing well, that all men praised them. Then come there Sir Placidas, a good knight, and met with Sir Kay, and smote him down horse and man, wherefore Sir Griflet was wroth, and met with Sir Placidas so hard, that horse and man fell to the earth. But when the five knights wist that Sir Kay had a fall, they were wroth out of wit, and therewith each of them five bare down a knight. When King Arthur and the two kings saw them begin to wax wroth on both parties, they leapt on small hackneys, and let cry that all men should depart unto their lodging. And so they went home and unarmed them, and so to evensong and supper. And after, the three kings went into a garden, and gave the prize unto Sir Kay, and to Lucas the butler, and unto Sir Griflet. And then they went unto council, and with them Gwenbaus, the brother unto Sir Ban and Bors, a wise clerk, and thither went Ulfius and Brastias, and Merlin. And after they had been in council, they went unto bed. And on the morn they heard mass, and to dinner, and so to their council, and made many arguments what were best to do. At the last they were concluded, that Merlin should go with a token of King Ban, and that was a ring, unto his men and King Bors'; and Gracian and Placidas should go again and keep their castles and their countries, as King Ban of Benwick, and King

Merlin brings reinforcements

Bors of Gaul had ordained them, and so they passed the sea and came to Benwick. And when the people saw King Ban's ring, and Gracian and Placidas, they were glad, and asked how the kings fared, and made great joy of their welfare and cording, and according unto the sovereign lords' desire, the men of war made them ready in all haste possible, so that they were fifteen thousand on horse and foot, and they had great plenty of victual with them, by Merlin's provision. But Gracian and Placidas were left to furnish and garnish the castles, for dread of King Claudas. Right so Merlin passed the sea well victualled both by water and by land. And when he came to the sea he sent home the foot men again, and took no more with him but ten thousand men on horseback, the most part men of arms, and so shipped and passed the sea into England, and landed at Dover; and through the wit of Merlin, he led the host northward, the priviest way that could be thought, unto the forest of Bedegraine, and there in a valley he lodged them secretly. Then rode Merlin unto Arthur and the two kings, and told them how he had sped; whereof they had great marvel, that man on earth might speed so soon, and go and come. So Merlin told them ten thousand were in the forest of Bedegraine, well armed at all points. Then was there no more to say, but to horseback went all the host as Arthur had afore purveyed. So with twenty thousand he passed by night and day, but there was made such an ordinance afore by Merlin, that there should no man of war

The compact of the eleven kings

ride nor go in no country on this side Trent water, but if he had a token from King Arthur, where through the king's enemies durst not ride as they did tofore to espy.

CHAPTER XII. How eleven kings gathered a great host against King Arthur. And so within a little space the three kings came unto the castle of Bedegraine, and found there a passing fair fellowship, and well beseen, whereof they had great joy, and victual they wanted none. This was the cause of the northern host: that they were reared for the despite and rebuke the six kings had at Carlion. And those six kings by their means, gat unto them five other kings; and thus they began to gather their people; and how they sware that for weal nor woe, they should not leave other, till they had destroyed Arthur. And then they made an oath. The first that began the oath was the Duke of Cambenet, that he would bring with him five thousand men of arms, the which were ready on horseback. Then sware King Brandegoris of Stranggore that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Then sware King Clariance of Northumberland he would bring three thousand men of arms. Then sware the king of the hundred knights, that was a passing good man and a young, that he would bring four thousand men of arms on horseback. Then there swore King Lot, a passing good knight, and Sir Gawain's father, that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Urience,

that was Sir Uwain's father, of the land of Gore, and he would bring six thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Idres of Cornwall, that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Cradelmas to bring five thousand men on horseback. Also there swore King Agwisance of Ireland to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Nentres to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Carados to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. So their whole host was of clean men of arms on horseback fifty thousand, and a-foot ten thousand, of good men's bodies. Then were they soon ready, and mounted upon horse and sent forth their fore-riders, for these eleven kings in their ways laid a siege unto the castle of Bedegraine; and so they departed and drew toward Arthur, and left few to abide at the siege, for the castle of Bedegraine was holden of King Arthur, and the men that were therein were Arthur's.

Arthur sets upon the enemy

CHAPTER XIII. Of a dream of the king with the hundred knights. So by Merlin's advice there were sent fore-riders to skim the country, and they met with the fore-riders of the north, and made them to tell which way the host came, and then they told it to Arthur, and by King Ban and Bors' council they let burn and destroy all the country afore them, where they should ride. The king with the hundred knights met a wonder dream two

The battle

nights afore the battle, that there blew a great wind, and blew down their castles and their towns, and after that came a water and bare it all away. All that heard of the sweven, said it was a token of great battle. Then by counsel of Merlin, when they wist which way the eleven kings would ride and lodge that night, at midnight they set upon them, as they were in their pavilions. But the scout-watch by their host cried, Lords! at arms! for here be your enemies at your hand!

CHAPTER XIV. How the eleven kings with their host fought against Arthur and his host, and many great feats of the war. Then King Arthur and King Ban and King Bors, with their good and trusty knights, set on them so fiercely that they made them overthrow their pavilions on their heads, but the eleven kings, by manly prowess of arms, took a fair champaign, but there was slain that morrowtide ten thousand good men's bodies. And so they had afore them a strong passage, yet were they fifty thousand of hardy men. Then it drew toward day. Now shall ye do by mine advice, said Merlin unto the three kings: I would that King Ban and King Bors, with their fellowship of ten thousand men, were put in a wood here beside, in an embushment, and keep them privy, and that they be laid or the light of the day come, and that they stir not till ye and your knights have fought with them long. And when it is daylight, dress your battle even afore them and

the passage, that they may see all your host, for then will they be the more hardy, when they see you but about twenty thousand men, and cause them to be the gladder to suffer you and your host to come over the passage. All the three kings and the whole barons said that Merlin said passingly well, and it was done anon as Merlin had devised. So on the morn, when either host saw other, the host of the north was well comforted. Then to Ulfius and Brastias were delivered three thousand men of arms, and they set on them fiercely in the passage, and slew on the right hand and on the left hand that it was wonder to tell. When that the eleven kings saw that there was so few a fellowship did such deeds of arms, they were ashamed and set on them again fiercely; and there was Sir Ulfius's horse slain under him, but he did marvellously well on foot. But the Duke Eustace of Cambenet and King Clariance of Northumberland, were alway grievous on Ulfius. When Brastias saw his fellow fared so withal, he smote the duke with a spear, that horse and man fell down. That saw King Clariance and returned unto Brastias, and either smote other so that horse and man went to the earth, and so they lay long astonied, and their horse knees brast to the hard bone. Then came Sir Kay the seneschal with six fellows with him, and did passing well. With that came the eleven kings, and there was Griflet put to the earth, horse and man, and Lucas the butler, horse and man, by King Brandegoris, and King Idres, and King Agwisance. Then

Feats of arms

Deeds of valour

waxed the medley passing hard on both parties. When Sir Kay saw Griflet on foot, he rode on King Nentres and smote him down, and led his horse unto Sir Griflet, and horsed him again. Also Sir Kay with the same spear smote down King Lot, and hurt him passing sore. That saw the king with the hundred knights, and ran unto Sir Kay and smote him down, and took his horse, and gave him King Lot, whereof he said gramercy. When Sir Griflet saw Sir Kay and Lucas the butler on foot, he took a sharp spear, great and square, and rode to Pinel, a good man of arms, and smote horse and man down, and then he took his horse, and gave him unto Sir Kay. When King Lot saw King Nentres on foot, he ran unto Melot de la Roche, and smote him down, horse and man, and gave King Nentres the horse, and horsed him again. Also the king of the hundred knights saw King Idres on foot, then he ran unto Gwimiart de Bloi, and smote him down, horse and man, and gave King Idres the horse, and horsed him again; and King Lot smote down Clariance de la Forest Savage, and gave the horse unto Duke Eustace. And so when they had horsed the kings again they drew them all eleven kings together, and said they would be revenged of the damage that they had taken that day. The meanwhile came in Sir Ector with an eager countenance, and found Ulfias and Brastias on foot, in great peril of death, that were foul defoiled under horse-feet. Then King Arthur as a lion, ran unto King Cradelment of North

Wales, and smote him through the left side, that the horse and the king fell down; and then he took the horse by the rein, and led him unto Ulfius, and said, Have this horse, mine old friend, for great need hast thou of horse. Gramercy, said Ulfias. Then Sir Arthur did so marvellously in arms, that all men had wonder. When the king with the hundred knights saw King Cradelment on foot, he ran unto Sir Ector, that was well horsed, Sir Kay's father, and smote horse and man down, and gave the horse unto the king, and horsed him again; and when King Arthur saw the king ride on Sir Ector's horse, he was wroth and with his sword he smote the king on the helm, that a quarter of the helm and shield fell down, and the sword carved down unto the horse's neck, and so the king and the horse fell down to the ground. Then Sir Kay came unto Sir Morganore, seneschal with the king of the hundred knights, and smote him down, horse and man, and led the horse unto his father, Sir Ector; then Sir Ector ran unto a knight, hight Lardans, and smote horse and man down, and led the horse unto Sir Brastias, that great need had of an horse, and was greatly defoiled. When Brastias beheld Lucas the butler, that lay like a dead man under the horse's feet, and ever Sir Griflet did marvellously for to rescue him, and there were always fourteen knights on Sir Lucas; then Brastias smote one of them on the helm, that it went to the teeth, and he rode to another and smote him, that the arm flew into the field. Then

The fortunes of the war

Continuation of the battle

he went to the third and smote him on the shoulder, that shoulder and arm flew in the field. And when Griflet saw rescues, he smote a knight on the temples, that head and helm went to the earth, and Griflet took the horse of that knight, and led him unto Sir Lucas, and bade him mount upon the horse and revenge his hurts. For Brastias had slain a knight tofore and horsed Griflet.

CHAPTER XV. Yet of the same battle. Then Lucas saw King Agwisance, that late had slain Moris de la Roche, and Lucas ran to him with a short spear that was great, that he gave him such a fall, that the horse fell down to the earth. Also Lucas found there on foot, Bloias de La Flandres, and Sir Gwinas, two hardy knights, and in that woodness that Lucas was in, he slew two bachelors and horsed them again. Then waxed the battle passing hard on both parties, but Arthur was glad that his knights were horsed again, and then they fought together, that the noise and sound rang by the water and the wood. Wherefore King Ban and King Bors made them ready, and dressed their shields and harness, and they were so courageous that many knights shook and bevered for eagerness. All this while Lucas, and Gwinas, and Briant, and Bellias of Flanders, held strong medley against six kings, that was King Lot, King Nentres, King Brandegoris, King Idres, King Uriens, and King Agwisance. So with the help of Sir Kay and of Sir Griflet they held these six kings hard, that unnethe

they had any power to defend them. But when Sir Arthur saw the battle would not be ended by no manner, he ferd wood as a lion, and steered his horse here and there, on the right hand, and on the left hand, that he stinted not till he had slain twenty knights. Also he wounded King Lot sore on the shoulder, and made him to leave that ground, for Sir Kay and Griflet did with King Arthur there great deeds of arms. Then Ulfius, and Brastias, and Sir Ector encountered against the Duke Eustace, and King Cradelment, and King Clariance of Northumberland, and King Carados, and against the king with the hundred knights. So these knights encountered with these kings, that they made them to avoid the ground. Then King Lot made great dole for his damages and his fellows, and said unto the ten kings, But if ye will do as I devise we shall be slain and destroyed; let me have the king with the hundred knights, and King Agwisance, and King Idres, and the Duke of Cambenet, and we five kings will have fifteen thousand men of arms with us, and we will go apart while ye six kings hold medley with twelve thousand; an we see that ye have foughten with them long, then will we come on fiercely, and else shall we never match them, said King Lot, but by this mean. So they departed as they here devised, and six kings made their party strong against Arthur, and made great war long. In the meanwhile brake the embushment of King Ban and King Bors, and Lyonses and Phariance had the vanguard, and they two knights met

Yet of the same battle

King Bors' feats of arms

with King Idres and his fellowship, and there began a great medley of breaking of spears, and smiting of swords, with slaying of men and horses, and King Idres was near at discomforture. That saw Agwisance the king, and put Lionses and Phariance in point of death; for the Duke of Cambenet came on withal with a great fellowship, so these two knights were in great danger of their lives that they were fain to return, but always they rescued themselves and their fellowship marvellously. When King Bors saw those knights put aback, it grieved him sore; then he came on so fast that his fellowship seemed as black as Inde. When King Lot had espied King Bors, he knew him well, then he said, O Jesu, defend us from death and horrible maims! for I see well we be in great peril of death; for I see yonder a king, one of the most worshipfullest men and one of the best knights of the world, is inclined unto his fellowship. What is he? said the king with the hundred knights. It is, said King Lot, King Bors of Gaul; I marvel how they come into this country without witting of us all. It was by Merlin's advice, said the knight. As for him, said King Carados, I will encounter with King Bors, an ye will rescue me when mister is. Go on, said they all, we will do all that we may. Then King Carados and his host rode on a soft pace, till that they come as nigh King Bors as bow-draught, then either battle let their horse run as fast as they might. And Bleoberis that was godson unto King Bors he bare his chief standard, that was a passing good

knight. Now shall we see, said King Bors, how these northern Britons can bear the arms: and King Bors encountered with a knight, and smote him throughout with a spear that he fell dead unto the earth, and after drew his sword and did marvellous deeds of arms, that all parties had great wonder thereof; and his knights failed not, but did their part, and King Carados was smitten to the earth. With that came the king with the hundred knights and rescued King Carados mightily by force of arms, for he was a passing good knight of a king, and but a young man.

King Ban's deeds of valour

CHAPTER XVI. Yet more of the same battle. By then came into the field King Ban as fierce as a lion, with bands of green and thereupon gold. Ha! ha! said King Lot, we must be discomfited, for yonder I see the most valiant knight of the world, and the man of the most renown, for such two brethren as is King Ban and King Bors are not living, wherefore we must needs void or die; and but if we avoid manly and wisely there is but death. When King Ban came into the battle, he came in so fiercely that the strokes redounded again from the wood and the water; wherefore King Lot wept for pity and dole that he saw so many good knights take their end. But through the great force of King Ban they made both the northern battles that were departed hurtle together for great dread, and the three kings and their knights slew on ever, that it was pity on to behold that multitude of the people that fled.

The progress of the battle

But King Lot, and king of the hundred knights, and King Morganore gathered the people together passing knightly, and did great prowess of arms, and held the battle all that day, like hard. When the king of the hundred knights beheld the great damage that King Ban did, he threst unto him with his horse, and smote him on high upon the helm, a great stroke, and astonied him sore. Then King Ban was wroth with him, and followed on him fiercely; the other saw that, and cast up his shield, and spurred his horse forward, but the stroke of King Ban fell down and carved a cantel off the shield, and the sword slid down by the hauberk behind his back, and cut through the trappings of steel and the horse even in two pieces, that the sword felt the earth. Then the king of the hundred knights voided the horse lightly, and with his sword he broached the horse of King Ban through and through. With that King Ban voided lightly from the dead horse, and then King Ban smote at the other so eagerly, and smote him on the helm that he fell to the earth. Also in that ire he felled King Morganore, and there was great slaughter of good knights and much people. By then came into the press King Arthur, and found King Ban standing among dead men and dead horse, fighting on foot as a wood lion, that there came none nigh him as far as he might reach with his sword but he caught a grievous buffet; whereof King Arthur had great pity. And Arthur was so bloody, that by his shield there might no man know him, for all was blood and brains on his

sword. And as Arthur looked by him he saw a knight that was passingly well horsed, and therewith Sir Arthur ran to him, and smote him on the helm, that his sword went unto his teeth, and the knight sank down to the earth dead, and anon Arthur took the horse by the rein, and led him unto King Ban, and said, Fair brother, have this horse, for ye have great mister thereof, and me repenteth sore of your great damage. It shall be soon revenged, said King Ban, for I trust in God mine eure is not such but some of them may sore repent this. I will well, said Arthur, for I see your deeds full actual; nevertheless, I might not come at you at that time. But when King Ban was mounted on horseback, then there began new battle the which was sore and hard, and passing great slaughter. And so through great force King Arthur, King Ban, and King Bors made their knights a little to withdraw them. But alway the eleven kings with their chivalry never turned back; and so withdrew them to a little wood, and so over a little river, and there they rested them, for on the night they might have no rest on the field. And then the eleven kings and knights put them on a heap all together, as men adread and out of all comfort. But there was no man might pass them, they held them so hard together both behind and before, that King Arthur had marvel of their deeds of arms, and was passing wroth. Ah, Sir Arthur, said King Ban and King Bors, blame them not, for they do as good men ought to do. For by my faith, said King Ban, they are the best fighting men,

The eleven kings withdraw

King Lot's counsel

and knights of most prowess, that ever I saw or heard speak of, and those eleven kings are men of great worship; and if they were longing unto you there were no king under the heaven had such eleven knights, and of such worship. I may not love them, said Arthur, they would destroy me. That wot we well, said King Ban and King Bors, for they are your mortal enemies, and that hath been proved aforehand, and this day they have done their part, and that is great pity of their wilfulness. Then all the eleven kings drew them together, and then said King Lot, Lords, ye must other ways than ye do, or else the great loss is behind; ye may see what people we have lost, and what good men we lose, because we wait always on these foot-men, and ever in saving of one of the foot-men we lose ten horsemen for him; therefore this is mine advice, let us put our foot-men from us, for it is near night, for the noble Arthur will not tarry on the foot-men, for they may save themselves, the wood is near hand. And when we horsemen be together, look every each of you kings let make such ordinance that none break upon pain of death. And who that seeth any man dresse him to flee, lightly that he be slain, for it is better that we slay a coward, than through a coward all we to be slain. How say ye? said King Lot, answer me all ye kings. It is well said, quoth King Nentres; so said the king of the hundred knights; the same said the King Carados, and King Uriens; so did King Idres and King Brandegoris; and so did King Cradelment, and the Duke of Cambenet;

the same said King Clariance and King Agwisance, and sware they would never fail other, neither for life nor for death. And whoso that fled, but did as they did, should be slain. Then they amended their harness, and righted their shields, and took new spears and set them on their thighs, and stood still as it had been a plombe of wood.

Arthur's forty knights

CHAPTER XVII. Yet more of the same battle, and how it was ended by Merlin.

When Sir Arthur and King Ban and Bors beheld them and all their knights, they praised them much for their noble cheer of chivalry, for the hardiest fighters that ever they heard or saw. With that, there dressed them a forty noble knights, and said unto the three kings, they would break their battle; these were their names: Lionses, Phariance, Ulfius, Brastias, Ector, Kay, Lucas the butler, Griflet le Fise de Dieu, Mariet de la Roche, Guinas de Bloi, Briant de la Forest Savage, Bellaus, Morians of the Castle of Maidens, Flannedrius of the Castle of Ladies, Annecians that was King Bors' godson, a noble knight, Ladinas de la Rouse, Emerause, Caulas, Graciens le Castlein, one Blois de la Case, and Sir Colgrevaunce de Gorre, all these knights rode on afore with spears on their thighs, and spurred their horses mightily as the horses might run. And the eleven kings with part of their knights rushed with their horses as fast as they might with their spears, and there they did on both parts marvellous deeds of arms. So came into the thick of

Merlin bids Arthur hold

the press, Arthur, Ban, and Bors, and slew down right on both hands, that their horses went in blood up to the fetlocks. But ever the eleven kings and their host was ever in the visage of Arthur. Wherefore Ban and Bors had great marvel, considering the great slaughter that there was, but at the last they were driven aback over a little river. With that came Merlin on a great black horse, and said unto Arthur, Thou hast never done, hast thou not done enough? of three score thousand this day hast thou left alive but fifteen thousand, and it is time to say Ho! For God is wroth with thee, that thou wilt never have done, for yonder eleven kings at this time will not be overthrown, but an thou tarry on them any longer, thy fortune will turn and they shall increase. And therefore withdraw you unto your lodging, and rest you as soon as ye may, and reward your good knights with gold and with silver, for they have well deserved it; there may no riches be too dear for them, for of so few men as ye have, there were never men did more of prowess than they have done to-day, for ye have matched this day with the best fighters of the world. That is truth, said King Ban and Bors. Also said Merlin, withdraw you where ye list, for this three year I dare undertake they shall not dare you; and by then ye shall hear new tidings. And then Merlin said unto Arthur, These eleven kings have more on hand than they are ware of, for the Saracens are landed in their countries, more than forty thousand, that burn and slay, and have laid siege at the castle Wandesborow,

and make great destruction; therefore dread you not this three year. Also, sir, all the goods that be gotten at this battle, let it be searched, and when ye have it in your hands, let it be given freely unto these two kings, Ban and Bors, that they may reward their knights withal; and that shall cause strangers to be of better will to do you service at need. Also you be able to reward your own knights of your own goods whensomever it liketh you. It is well said, quoth Arthur, and as thou hast devised, so shall it be done. When it was delivered to Ban and Bors, they gave the goods as freely to their knights as freely as it was given to them. Then Merlin took his leave of Arthur and of the two kings, for to go and see his master Bleise, that dwelt in Northumberland; and so he departed and came to his master, that was passing glad of his coming; and there he told how Arthur and the two kings had sped at the great battle, and how it was ended, and told the names of every king and knight of worship that was there. And so Bleise wrote the battle word by word, as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it was ended, and who had the worse. All the battles that were done in Arthur's days, Merlin did his master Bleise do write; also he did do write all the battles that every worthy knight did of Arthur's court. After this Merlin departed from his master and came to King Arthur, that was in the castle of Bedegraine, that was one of the castles that stood in the forest of Sherwood. And Merlin was so disguised that King Arthur knew him

End of the battle

Arthur goes against King of North Wales

not, for he was all befurred in black sheep skins, and a great pair of boots, and a bow and arrows, in a russet gown, and brought wild geese in his hand, and it was on the morn after Candlemas day; but King Arthur knew him not. Sir, said Merlin unto the king, will ye give me a gift? Wherefore, said King Arthur, should I give thee a gift, churl? Sir, said Merlin, ye were better to give me a gift that is not in your hand than to lose great riches, for here in the same place where the great battle was, is great treasure hid in the earth. Who told thee so, churl? said Arthur. Merlin told me so, said he. Then Ulfius and Brastias knew him well enough, and smiled. Sir, said these two knights, it is Merlin that so speaketh unto you. Then King Arthur was greatly abashed, and had marvel of Merlin, and so had King Ban and King Bors, and so they had great disport at him. So in the meanwhile there came a damosel that was an earl's daughter: his name was Sanam, and her name was Lionors, a passing fair damosel; and so she came thither for to do homage, as other lords did after the great battle. And King Arthur set his love greatly upon her, and so did she upon him, and the king had ado with her, and gat on her a child: his name was Borre, that was after a good knight, and of the Table Round. Then there came word that the King Rience of North Wales made great war on King Leodegrance of Cameliard, for the which thing Arthur was wroth, for he loved him well, and hated King Rience, for he was alway against him. So by ordinance of the

three kings that were sent home unto Benwick, and all they would depart for dread of King Claudas; Phariance, and Antemes, and Gratian, and Lionses of Payarne, with the leaders of those that should keep the kings' lands.

and rescues King of Cameliard

CHAPTER XVIII. How King Arthur, King Ban, and King Bors rescued King Leodegrance, and other incidents. And then King Arthur, and King Ban, and King Bors departed with their fellowship, a twenty thousand, and came within six days into the country of Cameliard, and there rescued King Leodegrance, and slew there much people of King Rience, unto the number of ten thousand men, and put him to flight. And then had these three kings great cheer of King Leodegrance, that thanked them of their great goodness, that they would revenge him of his enemies; and there had Arthur the first sight of Guenever, the king's daughter of Cameliard, and ever after he loved her. After they were wedded, as it telleth in the book. So, briefly to make an end, they took their leave to go into their own countries, for King Claudas did great destruction on their lands. Then said Arthur, I will go with you. Nay, said the kings, ye shall not at this time, for ye have much to do yet in these lands, therefore we will depart, and with the great goods that we have gotten in these lands by your gifts, we shall wage good knights and withstand the King Claudas' malice, for by the grace of God, an we have need we shall send to you for your succour; and if ye have need, send for us, and we will

Merlin foretells the fate of the eleven kings

not tarry, by the faith of our bodies. It shall not, said Merlin, need that these two kings come again in the way of war, but I know well King Arthur may not be long from you, for within a year or two ye shall have great need, and then shall he revenge you on your enemies, as ye have done on his. For these eleven kings shall die all in a day, by the great might and prowess of arms of two valiant knights (as it telleth after), their names be Balin le Savage, and Balan, his brother, that be marvellous good knights as be any living. Now turn we to the eleven kings that returned unto a city that hight Sorhaute, the which city was within King Uriens', and there they refreshed them as well as they might, and made leeches search their wounds, and sorrowed greatly for the death of their people. With that there came a messenger and told how there was come into their lands people that were lawless as well as Saracens, a forty thousand, and have burnt and slain all the people that they may come by, without mercy, and have laid siege on the castle of Wandesborow. Alas, said the eleven kings, here is sorrow upon sorrow, and if we had not warred against Arthur as we have done, he would soon revenge us; as for King Leodegrance, he loveth Arthur better than us, and as for King Rience, he hath enough to do with Leodegrance, for he hath laid seige unto him. So they consented together to keep all the marches of Cornwall, of Wales, and of the North. So first, they put King Idres in the City of Nauntes in Britain, with four thousand

men of arms, to watch both the water and the land. Also they put in the city of Windesan, King Nentres of Garlot, with four thousand knights to watch both on water and on land. Also they had of other men of war more than eight thousand, for to fortify all the fortresses in the marches of Cornwall. Also they put more knights in all the marches of Wales and Scotland, with many good men of arms, and so they kept them together the space of three year, and ever allied them with mighty kings and dukes and lords. And to them fell King Rience of North Wales, the which was a mighty man of men, and Nero that was a mighty man of men. And all this while they furnished them and garnished them of good men of arms, and victual, and of all manner of habiliments that pretendeth to the war, to avenge them for the battle of Bedegraine, as it telleth in the book of adventures following.

Arthur goes to Carlion

CHAPTER XIX. How King Arthur rode to Carlion, and of his dream, and how he saw the questing beast. Then after the departing of King Ban and of King Bors, King Arthur rode unto Carlion. And thither came to him, King Lot's wife, of Orkney, in manner of a message, but she was sent thither to espy the court of King Arthur; and she came richly beseen, with her four sons, Gawaine, Gaheris, Agravine, and Gareth, with many other knights and ladies. For she was a passing fair lady, therefore the king cast great love unto her, and desired to lie by her; so they were agreed, and he begat upon her Mordred, and she was

He has a marvellous dream

his sister, on his mother's side, Igraine. So there she rested her a month, and at the last departed. Then the king dreamed a marvellous dream whereof he was sore adread. But all this time King Arthur knew not that King Lot's wife was his sister. Thus was the dream of Arthur: Him thought there was come into this land griffins and serpents, and him thought they burnt and slew all the people in the land, and then him thought he fought with them, and they did him passing great harm, and wounded him full sore, but at the last he slew them. When the king awaked, he was passing heavy of his dream, and so to put it out of thoughts, he made him ready with many knights to ride a-hunting. As soon as he was in the forest the king saw a great hart afore him. This hart will I chase, said King Arthur, and so he spurred the horse, and rode after long, and so by fine force oft he was like to have smitten the hart; whereas the king had chased the hart so long, that his horse lost his breath, and fell down dead; then a yeoman fetched the king another horse. So the king saw the hart embushed, and his horse dead; he set him down by a fountain, and there he fell in great thoughts. And as he sat so, him thought he heard a noise of hounds, to the sum of thirty. And with that the king saw coming toward him the strangest beast that ever he saw or heard of; so the beast went to the well and drank, and the noise was in the beast's belly like unto the questing of thirty couple hounds; but all the while the beast drank there was no

noise in the beast's belly: and therewith the beast departed with a great noise, whereof the king had great marvel. And so he was in a great thought, and therewith he fell asleep. Right so there came a knight afoot unto Arthur and said, Knight full of thought and sleepy, tell me if thou sawest a strange beast pass this way. Such one saw I, said King Arthur, that is past two mile; what would ye with the beast? said Arthur. Sir, I have followed that beast long time, and killed mine horse, so would God I had another to follow my quest. Right so came one with the king's horse, and when the knight saw the horse, he prayed the king to give him the horse: for I have followed this quest this twelvemonth, and either I shall achieve him, or bleed of the best blood of my body. Pellinore, that time king, followed the questing beast, and after his death Sir Palamides followed it.

Merlin appears to Arthur

CHAPTER XX. How King Pellinore took Arthur's horse and followed the questing beast, and how Merlin met with Arthur.

Sir knight, said the king, leave that quest, and suffer me to have it, and I will follow it another twelvemonth. Ah, fool, said the knight unto Arthur, it is in vain thy desire, for it shall never be achieved but by me, or my next kin. Therewith he started unto the king's horse and mounted into the saddle, and said, Gramercy, this horse is my own. Well, said the king, thou mayst take my horse by force, but an I might prove thee whether thou were better on horseback or I. Well, said the

Merlin reveals the secret of Arthur's birth

knight, seek me here when thou wilt, and here nigh this well thou shalt find me, and so passed on his way. Then the king sat in a study, and bade his men fetch his horse as fast as ever they might. Right so came by him Merlin like a child of fourteen year of age, and saluted the king, and asked him why he was so pensive. I may well be pensive, said the king, for I have seen the marvellest sight that ever I saw. That know I well, said Merlin, as well as thyself, and of all thy thoughts, but thou art but a fool to take thought, for it will not amend thee. Also I know what thou art, and who was thy father, and of whom thou wert begotten; King Uther Pendragon was thy father, and begat thee on Igraine. That is false, said King Arthur, how shouldest thou know it, for thou are not so old of years to know my father? Yes, said Merlin, I know it better than ye or any man living. I will not believe thee, said Arthur, and was wroth with the child. So departed Merlin, and came again in the likeness of an old man of fourscore year of age, whereof the king was right glad, for he seemed to be right wise. Then said the old man, Why are ye so sad? I may well be heavy, said Arthur, for many things. Also here was a child, and told me many things that meseemeth he should not know, for he was not of age to know my father. Yes, said the old man, the child told you truth, and more would he have told you an ye would have suffered him; but ye have done a thing late that God is displeased with you, for ye have lain by your sister, and on her ye

have gotten a child that shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm. What are ye, said Arthur, that tell me these tidings? I am Merlin, and I was he in the child's likeness. Ah, said King Arthur, ye are a marvellous man, but I marvel much of thy words that I must die in battle. Marvel not, said Merlin, for it is God's will your body to be punished for your foul deeds; but I may well be sorry, said Merlin, for I shall die a shameful death to be put in the earth quick, and ye shall die a worshipful death. And as they talked this, came one with the king's horse, and so the king mounted on his horse, and Merlin on another, and so rode unto Carlion. And anon the king asked Ector and Ulfius how he was begotten, and they told him Uther Pendragon was his father and Queen Igraine his mother. Then he said to Merlin, I will that my mother be sent for, that I may speak with her; and if she say so herself, then will I believe it. In all haste, the queen was sent for, and she came and brought with her Morgan le Fay, her daughter, that was as fair a lady as any might be, and the king welcomed Igraine in the best manner.

which Igraine confirms

CHAPTER XXI. How Ulfius impeached Queen Igraine, Arthur's mother, of treason; and how a knight came and desired to have the death of his master revenged. Right so came Ulfius, and said openly that the king and all might hear that were feasted that day, Ye are the falsest lady of the world, and the most traitress unto the king's person. Beware, said

Ulfius impeaches Queen Igraine

Arthur, what thou sayest; thou speakest a great word. I am well ware, said Ulfius, what I speak, and here is my glove to prove it upon any man that will say the contrary, that this Queen Igraine is causer of your great damage, and of your great war. For, an she would have uttered it in the life of King Uther Pendragon, of the birth of you, and how ye were begotten, ye had never had the mortal wars that ye have had; for the most part of your barons of your realm knew never whose son ye were, nor of whom ye were begotten; and she that bare you of her body should have made it known openly in excusing of her worship and yours, and in likewise to all the realm, wherefore I prove her false to God and to you and to all your realm, and who will say the contrary I will prove it on his body. Then spake Igraine and said, I am a woman and I may not fight, but rather than I should be dishonoured, there would some good man take my quarrel. More, she said, Merlin knoweth well, and ye Sir Ulfius, how King Uther came to me in the Castle of Tintagel in the likeness of my lord, that was dead three hours tofore, and thereby gat a child that night upon me. And after the thirteenth day King Uther wedded me, and by his commandment when the child was born it was delivered unto Merlin and nourished by him, and so I saw the child never after, nor wot not what is his name, for I knew him never yet. And there Ulfius said to the queen, Merlin is more to blame than ye. Well I wot, said the queen, I bare a child by my lord King Uther,

but I wot not where he is become. Then Merlin took the king by the hand, saying, This is your mother. And therewith Sir Ector bare witness how he nourished him by Uther's commandment. And therewith King Arthur took his mother, Queen Igraine, in his arms and kissed her, and either wept upon other. And then the king let make a feast that lasted eight days. Then on a day there come in the court a squire on horseback, leading a knight before him wounded to the death, and told him how there was a knight in the forest had reared up a pavilion by a well, and hath slain my master, a good knight, his name was Miles; wherefore I beseech you that my master may be buried, and that some knight may revenge my master's death. Then the noise was great of that knight's death in the court, and every man said his advice. Then came Griflet that was but a squire, and he was but young, of the age of the King Arthur, so he besought the king for all his service that he had done him to give him the order of knighthood.

Arthur and Igraine reconciled

CHAPTER XXII. How Griflet was made knight, and jousted with a knight. Thou art full young and tender of age, said Arthur, for to take so high an order on thee. Sir, said Griflet, I beseech you make me knight. Sir, said Merlin, it were great pity to lose Griflet, for he will be a passing good man when he is of age, abiding with you the term of his life. And if he adventure his body with yonder knight at the fountain, it is in great peril if ever he come

Griflet jousts with the Knight of the Fountain

again, for he is one of the best knights of the world, and the strongest man of arms. Well, said Arthur. So at the desire of Griflet the king made him knight. Now, said Arthur unto Sir Griflet, sith I have made you knight thou must give me a gift. What ye will, said Griflet. Thou shalt promise me by the faith of thy body, when thou has jousted with the knight at the fountain, whether it fall ye be on foot or on horseback, that right so ye shall come again unto me without making any more debate. I will promise you, said Griflet, as you desire. Then took Griflet his horse in great haste, and dressed his shield and took a spear in his hand, and so he rode a great wallop till he came to the fountain, and thereby he saw a rich pavilion, and thereby under a cloth stood a fair horse well saddled and bridled, and on a tree a shield of divers colours and a great spear. Then Griflet smote on the shield with the butt of his spear, that the shield fell down to the ground. With that the knight came out of the pavilion, and said, Fair knight, why smote ye down my shield? For I will joust with you, said Griflet. It is better ye do not, said the knight, for ye are but young, and late made knight, and your might is nothing to mine. As for that, said Griflet, I will joust with you. That is me loath, said the knight, but sith I must needs, I will dress me thereto: of whence be ye? said the knight. Sir, I am of Arthur's court. So the two knights ran together that Griflet's spear all to-shivered; and therewithal he smote Griflet through the shield and the left side, and brake

the spear that the truncheon stuck in his body, that horse and knight fell down.

The twelve knights from Rome

CHAPTER XXIII. How twelve knights came from Rome and asked truage for this land of Arthur, and how Arthur fought with a knight. When the knight saw him lie so on the ground, he alit, and was passing heavy, for he weened he had slain him, and then he unlaced his helm and gat him wind, and so with the truncheon he set him on his horse and gat him wind, and so betook him to God, and said he had a mighty heart, and if he might live he would prove a passing good knight. And so Sir Griflet rode to the court, where great dole was made for him. But through good leeches he was healed and saved. Right so came into the court twelve knights, and were aged men, and they came from the Emperor of Rome, and they asked of Arthur truage for this realm, other else the emperor would destroy him and his land. Well, said King Arthur, ye are messengers, therefore ye may say what ye will, other-else ye should die therefore. But this is mine answer: I owe the emperor no truage, nor none will I hold him, but on a fair field I shall give him my truage that shall be with a sharp spear, or else with a sharp sword, and that shall not be long, by my father's soul, Uther Pendragon. And therewith the messengers departed passingly wroth, and King Arthur as wroth, for in evil time came they then; for the king was passingly wroth for the hurt of Sir Griflet. And so he commanded a privy man of his chamber

Arthur saves Merlin

that or it be day his best horse and armour, with all that longeth unto his person, be without the city or to-morrow day. Right so or to-morrow day he met with his man and his horse, and so mounted up and dressed his shield and took his spear, and bade his chamberlain tarry there till he came again. And so Arthur rode a soft pace till it was day, and then was he ware of three churls chasing Merlin, and would have slain him. Then the king rode unto them, and bade them: Flee, churls! then were they afeard when they saw a knight, and fled. O Merlin, said Arthur, here hadst thou been slain for all thy crafts had I not been. Nay, said Merlin, not so, for I could save myself an I would; and thou art more near thy death than I am, for thou goest to the deathward, an God be not thy friend. So as they went thus talking they came to the fountain, and the rich pavilion there by it. Then King Arthur was ware where sat a knight armed in a chair. Sir knight, said Arthur, for what cause abidest thou here, that there may no knight ride this way but if he joust with thee? said the king. I rede thee leave that custom, said Arthur. This custom, said the knight, have I used and will use maugre who saith nay, and who is grieved with my custom let him amend it that will. I will amend it, said Arthur. I shall defend thee, said the knight. Anon he took his horse and dressed his shield and took a spear, and they met so hard either in other's shields, that all to-shivered their spears. Therewith anon Arthur pulled out his sword. Nay, not so, said the

knight; it is fairer, said the knight, that we twain run more together with sharp spears. I will well, said Arthur, an I had any more spears. I have enow, said the knight; so there came a squire and brought two good spears, and Arthur chose one and he another; so they spurred their horses and came together with all their mights, that either brake their spears to their hands. Then Arthur set hand on his sword. Nay, said the knight, ye shall do better, ye are a passing good jouster as ever I met withal, and once for the love of the high order of knighthood let us joust once again. I assent me, said Arthur. Anon there were brought two great spears, and every knight gat a spear, and therewith they ran together that Arthur's spear all to-shivered. But the other knight hit him so hard in midst of the shield, that horse and man fell to the earth, and therewith Arthur was eager, and pulled out his sword, and said, I will assay thee, sir knight, on foot, for I have lost the honour on horseback. I will be on horseback, said the knight. Then was Arthur wroth, and dressed his shield toward him with his sword drawn. When the knight saw that, he alit, for him thought no worship to have a knight at such avail, he to be on horseback and he on foot, and so he alit and dressed his shield unto Arthur. And there began a strong battle with many great strokes, and so hewed with their swords that the cantels flew in the fields, and much blood they bled both, that all the place there as they fought was overbled with blood, and thus they fought long and rested them, and then they

Arthur fights with a knight

Arthur worsted by the knight

went to the battle again, and so hurtled together like two rams that either fell to the earth. So at the last they smote together that both their swords met even together. But the sword of the knight smote King Arthur's sword in two pieces, wherefore he was heavy. Then said the knight unto Arthur, Thou art in my daunger whether me list to save thee or slay thee, and but thou yield thee as overcome and recreant, thou shalt die. As for death, said King Arthur, welcome be it when it cometh, but to yield me unto thee as recreant I had liefer die than to be so shamed. And therewithal the king leapt unto Pellinore, and took him by the middle and threw him down, and rased off his helm. When the knight felt that he was adread, for he was a passing big man of might, and anon he brought Arthur under him, and rased off his helm and would have smitten off his head.

CHAPTER XXIV. How Merlin saved Arthur's life, and threw an enchantment on King Pellinore and made him to sleep.

Therewithal came Merlin and said, Knight, hold thy hand, for an thou slay that knight thou puttest this realm in the greatest damage that ever was realm: for this knight is a man of more worship than thou wotest of. Why, who is he? said the knight. It is King Arthur. Then would he have slain him for dread of his wrath, and heaved up his sword, and therewith Merlin cast an enchantment to the knight, that he fell to the earth in a great sleep. Then Merlin took up King Arthur, and rode forth on

the knight's horse. Alas! said Arthur, what hast thou done, Merlin? hast thou slain this good knight by thy crafts? There liveth not so worshipful a knight as he was; I had liefer than the stint of my land a year that he were alive. Care ye not, said Merlin, for he is wholer than ye; for he is but a-sleep, and will awake within three hours. I told you, said Merlin, what a knight he was; here had ye been slain had I not been. Also there liveth not a bigger knight than he is one, and he shall hereafter do you right good service; and his name is Pellinore, and he shall have two sons that shall be passing good men; save one they shall have no fellow of prowess and of good living, and their names shall be Percivale of Wales and Lamerake of Wales, and he shall tell you the name of your own son begotten of your sister that shall be the destruction of all this realm.

Merlin saves Arthur

CHAPTER XXV. How Arthur by the mean of Merlin gat Excalibur his sword of the Lady of the Lake. Right so the king and he departed, and went unto an hermit that was a good man and a great leech. So the hermit searched all his wounds and gave him good salves; so the king was there three days, and then were his wounds well amended that he might ride and go, and so departed. And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours, an I may. So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was

Arthur takes Excalibur

ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo! said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damosel going upon the lake. What damosel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen; and this damosel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damosel unto Arthur, and saluted him, and he her again. Damosel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur, king, said the damosel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well! said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time. So Sir Arthur and Merlin alit and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him, and the arm and the hand went under the water. And so they came unto the land and rode forth, and then Sir Arthur saw a rich pavilion. What signifieth yonder pavilion? It is the knight's pavilion, said Merlin, that ye fought with last, Sir Pellinore; but he is out, he is not there. He hath ado with a knight of yours that hight Egglame, and they have foughten

together, but at the last Egglame fled, and else he had been dead, and he hath chased him even to Carlion, and we shall meet with him anon in the highway. That is well said, said Arthur, now have I a sword, now will I wage battle with him, and be avenged on him. Sir, you shall not so, said Merlin, for the knight is weary of fighting and chasing, so that ye shall have no worship to have ado with him; also he will not be lightly matched of one knight living, and therefore it is my counsel, let him pass, for he shall do you good service in short time, and his sons after his days. Also ye shall see that day in short space, you shall be right glad to give him your sister to wed. When I see him, I will do as ye advise me, said Arthur. Then Sir Arthur looked on the sword, and liked it passing well. Whether liketh you better, said Merlin, the sword or the scabbard? Me liketh better the sword, said Arthur. Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the swords, for whiles ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall never lose no blood be ye never so sore wounded, therefore keep well the scabbard always with you. So they rode unto Carlion, and by the way they met with Sir Pellinore; but Merlin had done such a craft, that Pellinore saw not Arthur, and he passed by without any words. I marvel, said Arthur, that the knight would not speak. Sir, said Merlin, he saw you not, for an he had seen you, ye had not lightly departed. So they came unto Carlion, whereof his knights were passing glad. And when they heard of his adventures, they

He again meets Pellinore

He returns to Carlion

marvelled that he would jeopard his person so, alone. But all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain, that would put his person in adventure as other poor knights did.

CHAPTER XXVI. How tidings came to Arthur that King Rience had overcome eleven kings, and how he desired Arthur's beard to trim his mantle. This meanwhile came a messenger from King Rience of North Wales, and king he was of all Ireland, and of many isles. And this was his message, greeting well King Arthur in this manner wise, saying that King Rience had discomfited and overcome eleven kings, and every each of them did him homage, and that was this, they gave him their beards clean flayed off, as much as there was; wherefore the messenger came for King Arthur's beard. For King Rience had purfled a mantle with kings' beards, and there lacked one place of the mantle; wherefore he sent for his beard, or else he would enter into his lands, and burn and slay, and never leave till he have the head and the beard. Well, said Arthur, thou hast said thy message, the which is the most villainous and lewdest message that ever man heard sent unto a king; also thou mayest see my beard is full young yet to make a purfle of it. But tell thou thy king this: I owe him none homage, nor none of mine elders, but or it be long to, he shall do me homage on both his knees, or else he shall lose his head, by the faith of my body, for this is the most shame-

fulest message that ever I heard speak of. I have espied thy king met never yet with worshipful man, but tell him, I will have his head without he do me homage. Then the messenger departed. Now is there any here, said Arthur, that knoweth King Rience? Then answered a knight that hight Naram, Sir, I know the king well; he is a passing good man of his body, as few be living, and a passing proud man, and Sir, doubt ye not he will make war on you with a mighty puissance. Well, said Arthur, I shall ordain for him in short time.

King Rience's message

CHAPTER XXVII. How all the children were sent for that were born on May-day, and how Mordred was saved. Then King Arthur let send for all the children born on May-day, begotten of lords and born of ladies; for Merlin told King Arthur that he that should destroy him should be born on May-day, wherefore he sent for them all, upon pain of death; and so there were found many lords' sons, and all were sent unto the king, and so was Mordred sent by King Lot's wife, and all were put in a ship to the sea, and some were four weeks old, and some less. And so by fortune the ship drave unto a castle, and was all to-riven, and destroyed the most part, save that Mordred was cast up, and a good man found him, and nourished him till he was fourteen year old, and then he brought him to the court, as it rehearseth afterward, toward the end of the Death of Arthur. So many

Fate of the May-day children

lords and barons of this realm were displeased, for their children were so lost, and many put the wite on Merlin more than on Arthur; so what for dread and for love, they held their peace. But when the messenger came to King Rience, then was he wood out of measure, and purveyed him for a great host, as it rehearseth after in the book of Balin le Savage, that followeth next after, how by adventure Balin gat the sword.

Explicit Liber Primus.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I. Of a damosel which came girt with a sword for to find a man of such virtue to draw it out of the scabbard.

Rience makes wars upon Arthur

After the death of Uther Pendragon reigned Arthur his son, the which had great war in his days for to get all England into his hand. For there were many kings within the realm of England, and in Wales, Scotland, and Cornwall. So it befell on a time when King Arthur was at London, there came a knight and told the king tidings how that the King Rience of North Wales had reared a great number of people, and were entered into the land, and burnt and slew the king's true liege people. If this be true, said Arthur, it were great shame unto mine estate but that he were mightily withstood. It is truth, said the knight, for I saw the host myself. Well, said the king, let make a cry, that all the lords, knights, and gentlemen of arms, should draw unto a castle called Camelot in those days, and there the king would let make a council-general and a great jousts. So when the king was come thither with all his baronage, and lodged as they seemed best, there was come a damosel the which was sent on message from the great lady Lile of Avelion. And when she came before King Arthur, she told from whom she came, and how she was sent on message

The lady with the sword

unto him for these causes. Then she let her mantle fall that was richly furred; and then was she girt with a noble sword whereof the king had marvel, and said, Damosel, for what cause are ye girt with that sword? it beseemeth you not. Now shall I tell you, said the damosel; this sword that I am girt withal doth me great sorrow and cumberance, for I may not be delivered of this sword but by a knight, but he must be a passing good man of his hands and of his deeds, and without villainy or treachery, and without treason. And if I may find such a knight that hath all these virtues, he may draw out this sword out of the sheath, for I have been at King Rience's, it was told me there were passing good knights, and he and all his knights have assayed it and none can speed. This is a great marvel, said Arthur, if this be sooth; I will myself assay to draw out the sword, not presuming upon myself that I am the best knight, but that I will begin to draw at your sword in giving example to all the barons that they shall assay every each one after other when I have assayed it. Then Arthur took the sword by the sheath and by the girdle and pulled at it eagerly, but the sword would not out. Sir, said the damosel, you need not to pull half so hard, for he that shall pull it out shall do it with little might. Ye say well, said Arthur; now assay ye all my barons, but beware ye be not defiled with shame, treachery, nor guile. Then it will not avail, said the damosel, for he must be a clean knight without villainy, and of a gentle strain of

father side and mother side. Most of all the barons of the Round Table that were there at that time assayed all by row, but there might none speed; wherefore the damosel made great sorrow out of measure, and said, Alas! I weened in this Court had been the best knights without treachery or treason. By my faith, said Arthur, here are good knights, as I deem, as any be in the world, but their grace is not to help you, wherefore I am displeased.

The knights try to draw out the sword

CHAPTER II. How Balin, arrayed like a poor knight, pulled out the sword, which afterward was the cause of his death. Then fell it so that time there was a poor knight with King Arthur, that had been prisoner with him half a year and more for slaying of a knight, the which was cousin unto King Arthur. The name of this knight was called Balin, and by good means of the barons he was delivered out of prison, for he was a good man named of his body, and he was born in Northumberland; and so he went privily into the court, and saw this adventure, whereof it raised his heart, and he would assay it as other knights did, but for he was poor and poorly arrayed he put him not far in press; but in his heart he was fully assured to do as well, if his grace happed him, as any knight that there was. And as the damosel took her leave of Arthur and of all the barons, so departing, this knight Balin called unto her, and said, Damosel, I pray you of your courtesy, suffer me as well to assay as these lords; though that I be so poorly clothed, in my heart

and all fail

meseemeth I am fully assured as some of these others, and meseemeth in my heart to speed right well. The damosel beheld the poor knight, and saw he was a likely man, but for his poor arrayment she thought he should be of no worship without villainy or treachery. And then she said unto the knight, Sir, it needeth not to put me to more pain or labour, for it seemeth not you to speed there as other have failed. Ah! fair Damosel, said Balin, worthiness, and good tatches, and good deeds, are not only in arrayment, but manhood and worship is hid within man's person, and many a worshipful knight is not known unto all people, and therefore worship and hardiness is not in arrayment. By God, said the Damosel, ye say sooth; therefore ye shall assay to do what ye may. Then Balin took the sword by the girdle and sheath, and drew it out easily; and when he looked on the sword it pleased him much. Then had the king and all the barons great marvel that Balin had done that adventure, and many knights had great despite of Balin. Certes, said the damosel, this is a passing good knight, and the best that ever I found, and most of worship without treason, treachery, or villainy, and many marvels shall he do. Now, gentle and courteous knight, give me the sword again. Nay, said Balin, for this sword will I keep, but it be taken from me with force. Well, said the damosel, ye are not wise to keep the sword from me, for ye shall slay with the sword the best friend that ye have, and the man that ye most love in the world, and the sword shall be your destruction. I shall

take the adventure, said Balin, that God will ordain me, but the sword ye shall not have at this time, by the faith of my body. Ye shall repent it within short time, said the damosel, for I would have the sword more for your avail than for mine, for I am passing heavy for your sake; for ye will not believe that sword shall be your destruction, and that is great pity. With that the damosel departed, making great sorrow. Anon after, Balin sent for his horse and armour, and so would depart from the court, and took his leave of King Arthur. Nay, said the king, I suppose ye will not depart so lightly from this fellowship, I suppose ye are displeased that I have shewed you unkindness; blame me the less, for I was misinformed against you, but I weened ye had not been such a knight as ye are, of worship and prowess, and if ye will abide in this court among my fellowship, I shall so advance you as ye shall be pleased. God thank your highness, said Balin, your bounty and highness may no man praise half to the value; but at this time I must needs depart, beseeching you alway of your good grace. Truly, said the king, I am right wroth for your departing; I pray you, fair knight, that ye tarry not long, and ye shall be right welcome to me, and to my barons, and I shall amend all amiss that I have done against you. God thank your great lordship, said Balin, and therewith made him ready to depart. Then the most part of the knights of the Round Table said that Balin did not this adventure all only by might, but by witchcraft.

Balin succeeds

Lady of the Lake claims her promised gift

CHAPTER III. How the Lady of the Lake demanded the knight's head that had won the sword, or the maiden's head. The meanwhile, that this knight was making him ready to depart, there came into the court a lady that hight the Lady of the Lake. And she came on horseback, richly beseen, and saluted King Arthur, and there asked him a gift that he promised her when she gave him the sword. That is sooth, said Arthur, a gift I promised you, but I have forgotten the name of my sword that ye gave me. The name of it, said the lady, is Excalibur, that is as much to say as Cut-steel. Ye say well, said the king, ask what ye will and ye shall have it, an it lie in my power to give it. Well, said the lady, I ask the head of the knight that hath won the sword, or else the damosel's head that brought it; I take no force though I have both their heads, for he slew my brother, a good knight and a true, and that gentlewoman was causer of my father's death. Truly, said King Arthur, I may not grant neither of their heads with my worship, therefore ask what ye will else, and I shall fulfil your desire. I will ask none other thing, said the lady. When Balin was ready to depart, he saw the Lady of the Lake, that by her means had slain Balin's mother, and he had sought her three years; and when it was told him that she asked his head of King Arthur, he went to her straight and said, Evil be you found; ye would have my head, and therefore ye shall lose yours, and with his sword lightly he smote off her head before King Arthur.

Balin strikes off her head

Alas, for shame! said Arthur, why have ye done so? ye have shamed me and all my court, for this was a lady that I was beholden to, and hither she came under my safe-conduct; I shall never forgive you that trespass. Sir, said Balin, me forthinketh of your displeasure, for this same lady was the untruest lady living, and by enchantment and sorcery she hath been the destroyer of many good knights, and she was causer that my mother was burnt, through her falsehood and treachery. What cause soever ye had, said Arthur, ye should have forborne her in my presence; therefore, think not the contrary, ye shall repent it, for such another despite had I never in my court; therefore withdraw you out of my court in all haste ye may. Then Balin took up the head of the lady, and bare it with him to his hostelry, and there he met with his squire, that was sorry he had displeased King Arthur, and so they rode forth out of the town. Now, said Balin, we must depart, take thou this head and bear it to my friends, and tell them how I have sped, and tell my friends in Northumberland that my most foe is dead. Also tell them how I am out of prison, and what adventure befel me at the getting of this sword. Alas! said the squire, ye are greatly to blame for to displease King Arthur. As for that, said Balin, I will hie me in all the haste that I may to meet with King Rience and destroy him, either else to die therefore; and if it may hap me to win him, then will King Arthur be my good and gracious lord. Where shall I meet with you? said the

Balin rides away

squire. In King Arthur's court, said Balin. So his squire and he departed at that time. Then King Arthur and all the court made great dole and had shame of the death of the Lady of the Lake. Then the king buried her richly.

CHAPTER IV. How Merlin told the adventure of this damosel. At that time there was a knight, the which was the king's son of Ireland, and his name was Lanceor, the which was an orgulous knight, and counted himself one of the best of the court; and he had great despite at Balin for the achieving of the sword, that any should be accounted more hardy, or more of prowess; and he asked King Arthur if he would give him leave to ride after Balin and to revenge the despite that he had done. Do your best, said Arthur, I am right wroth with Balin; I would he were quit of the despite that he hath done to me and to my court. Then this Lanceor went to his hostelry to make him ready. In the meanwhile came Merlin unto the court of King Arthur, and there was told him the adventure of the sword, and the death of the Lady of the Lake. Now shall I say you, said Merlin; this same damosel that here standeth, that brought the sword unto your court, I shall tell you the cause of her coming: she was the falsest damosel that liveth. Say not so, said they. She hath a brother, a passing good knight of prowess and a full true man; and this damosel loved another knight that held her to paramour, and this good knight her brother met

with the knight that held her to paramour, and slew him by force of his hands. When this false damosel understood this, she went to the Lady Lile of Avelion, and besought her of help, to be avenged on her own brother.

Lanceor pursues Balin

CHAPTER V. How Balin was pursued by Sir Lanceor, knight of Ireland, and how he jousted and slew him. And so this Lady Lile of Avelion took her this sword that she brought with her, and told there should no man pull it out of the sheath but if he be one of the best knights of this realm, and he should be hard and full of prowess, and with that sword he should slay her brother. This was the cause that the damosel came into this court. I know it as well as ye. Would God she had not come into this court, but she came never in fellowship of worship to do good, but always great harm; and that knight that hath achieved the sword shall be destroyed by that sword, for the which will be great domage, for there liveth not a knight of more prowess than he is, and he shall do unto you, my Lord Arthur, great honour and kindness; and it is great pity he shall not endure but a while, for of his strength and hardiness I know not his match living. So the knight of Ireland armed him at all points, and dressed his shield on his shoulder, and mounted upon horseback, and took his spear in his hand, and rode after a great pace, as much as his horse might go; and within a little space on a mountain he had a sight of Balin, and with a loud voice he cried, Abide, knight, for ye shall abide whether ye

and is slain by him

will or nill, and the shield that is tofore you shall not help. When Balin heard the noise, he turned his horse fiercely, and said, Fair knight, what will ye with me, will ye joust with me? Yea, said the Irish knight, therefore come I after you. Peradventure, said Balin, it had been better to have holden you at home, for many a man weeneth to put his enemy to a rebuke, and oft it falleth to himself. Of what court be ye sent from? said Balin. I am come from the court of King Arthur, said the knight of Ireland, that come hither for to revenge the despite ye did this day to King Arthur and to his court. Well, said Balin, I see well I must have ado with you, that me forthinketh for to grieve King Arthur, or any of his court; and your quarrel is full simple, said Balin, unto me, for the lady that is dead, did me great damage, and else would I have been loath as any knight that liveth for to slay a lady. Make you ready, said the knight Lanceor, and dress you unto me, for that one shall abide in the field. Then they took their spears, and came together as much as their horses might drive, and the Irish knight smote Balin on the shield, that all went shivers of his spear, and Balin hit him through the shield, and the hauberk perished, and so pierced through his body and the horse's croup, and anon turned his horse fiercely, and drew out his sword, and wist not that he had slain him, and then he saw him lie as a dead corpse.

CHAPTER VI. How a damosel, which was love to Lanceor, slew herself for love, and how Balin met with his brother Balan.

Lanceor's love slays herself

Then he looked by him, and was ware of a damosel that came riding full fast as the horse might ride, on a fair palfrey. And when she espied that Lanceor was slain, she made sorrow out of measure, and said, O Balin, two bodies thou hast slain and one heart, and two hearts in one body, and two souls thou hast lost. And therewith she took the sword from her love that lay dead, and fell to the ground in a swoon. And when she arose she made great dole out of measure, the which sorrow grieved Balin passingly sore, and he went unto her for to have taken the sword out of her hand, but she held it so fast he might not take it out of her hand unless he should have hurt her, and suddenly she set the pommel to the ground, and rove herself through the body. When Balin espied her deeds, he was passing heavy in his heart, and ashamed that so fair a damosel had destroyed herself for the love of his death. Alas, said Balin, me repenteth sore the death of this knight, for the love of this damosel, for there was much true love betwixt them both. And for sorrow he might not longer behold him, but turned his horse and looked toward a great forest, and thefe he was ware, by the arms, of his brother Balan. And when they were met they put off their helms and kissed together, and wept for joy and pity. Then Balan said, I little weened to have met with you at this sudden adventure; I am right glad of your deliverance out of your

Balin meets his brother Balan

dolorous prisonment, for a man told me, in the castle of Four Stones, that ye were delivered, and that man had seen you in the court of King Arthur, and therefore I came hither into this country, for here I supposed to find you. Anon the knight Balin told his brother of his adventure of the sword, and of the death of the Lady of the Lake, and how King Arthur was displeased with him. Wherefore he sent this knight after me, that lieth here dead, and the death of this damosel grieveth me sore. So doth it me, said Balan, but ye must take the adventure that God will ordain you. Truly, said Balin, I am right heavy that my Lord Arthur is displeased with me, for he is the most worshipful knight that reigneth now on earth, and his love will I get or else will I put my life in adventure, for the King Rience lieth at a siege at Castle Terrabil, and thither will we draw in all haste, to prove our worship and prowess upon him. I will well, said Balan, that we do, and we will help each other as brethren ought to do.

CHAPTER VII. How a dwarf reproved Balin for the death of Lanceor, and how King Mark of Cornwall found them, and made a tomb over them. Now go we hence, said Balin, and well be we met. The meanwhile as they talked, there came a dwarf from the city of Camelot on horseback, as much as he might, and found the dead bodies, wherefore he made great dole, and pulled out his hair for sorrow, and said, Which of you knights have done this deed? Whereby askest thou it? said Balan.

For I would wit it, said the dwarf. It was I, said Balin, that slew this knight in my defence, for hither he came to chase me, and either I must slay him or he me; and this damosel slew herself for his love, which repenteth me, and for her sake I shall owe all women the better love. Alas, said the dwarf, thou hast done great damage unto thyself, for this knight that is here dead was one of the most valiantest men that lived, and trust well, Balin, the kin of this knight will chase you through the world till they have slain you. As for that, said Balin, I fear not greatly, but I am right heavy that I have displeased my lord King Arthur, for the death of this knight. So as they talked together, there came a king of Cornwall riding, the which hight King Mark. And when he saw these two bodies dead, and understood how they were dead, by the two knights above said, then made the king great sorrow for the true love that was betwixt them, and said, I will not depart till I have on this earth made a tomb, and there he pight his pavilions and sought through all the country to find a tomb, and in a church they found one was fair and rich, and then the king let put them both in the earth, and put the tomb upon them, and wrote the names of them both on the tomb. How here lieth Lanceor the king's son of Ireland, that at his own request was slain by the hands of Balin; and how his lady, Colombe, and paramour, slew herself with her love's sword for dole and sorrow.

King Mark raises a tomb over the lovers

Merlin prophesies

CHAPTER VIII. How Merlin prophesied that two the best knights of the world should fight there, which were Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram. The meanwhile as this was a-doing, in came Merlin to King Mark, and seeing all his doing, said, Here shall be in this same place the greatest battle betwixt two knights that was or ever shall be, and the truest lovers, and yet none of them shall slay other. And there Merlin wrote their names upon the tomb with letters of gold that should fight in that place, whose names were Launcelot de Lake, and Tristram. Thou art a marvellous man, said King Mark unto Merlin, that speakest of such marvels, thou art a boistous man and an unlikely to tell of such deeds. What is thy name? said King Mark. At this time, said Merlin, I will not tell, but at that time when Sir Tristram is taken with his sovereign lady, then ye shall hear and know my name, and at that time ye shall hear tidings that shall not please you. Then said Merlin to Balin, Thou hast done thyself great hurt, because that thou savest not this lady that slew herself, that might have saved her an thou wouldest. By the faith of my body, said Balin, I might not save her, for she slew herself suddenly. Me repenteth, said Merlin; because of the death of that lady thou shalt strike a stroke most dolorous that ever man struck, except the stroke of our Lord, for thou shalt hurt the truest knight and the man of most worship that now liveth, and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be in great poverty, misery and wretchedness

twelve years, and the knight shall not be whole of that wound for many years. Then Merlin took his leave of Balin. And Balin said, If I wist it were sooth that ye say I should do such a perilous deed as that, I would slay myself to make thee a liar. Therewith Merlin vanished away suddenly. And then Balan and his brother took their leave of King Mark. First, said the king, tell me your name. Sir, said Balan, ye may see he beareth two swords, thereby ye may call him the knight with the two swords. And so departed King Mark unto Camelot to King Arthur, and Balin took the way toward King Rience; and as they rode together they met with Merlin disguised, but they knew him not. Whither ride you? said Merlin. We have little to do, said the two knights, to tell thee, but what is thy name? said Balin. At this time, said Merlin, I will not tell it thee. It is evil seen, said the knights, that thou art a true man that thou wilt not tell thy name. As for that, said Merlin, be it as it be may, I can tell you wherefore ye ride this way, for to meet King Rience; but it will not avail you without ye have my counsel. Ah! said Balin, ye are Merlin; we will be ruled by your counsel. Come on, said Merlin, ye shall have great worship, and look that ye do knightly, for ye shall have great need. As for that, said Balin, dread you not, we will do what we may.

Balin and Balan again meet Merlin

They meet with and take King Rience

CHAPTER IX. How Balin and his brother, by the counsel of Merlin, took King Rience and brought him to King Arthur. Then Merlin lodged them in a wood among leaves beside the highway, and took off the bridles of their horses and put them to grass and laid them down to rest them till it was nigh midnight. Then Merlin bade them rise, and make them ready, for the king was nigh them, that was stolen away from his host with a three score horses of his best knights, and twenty of them rode tofore to warn the Lady de Vance that the king was coming, for that night King Rience should have lain with her. Which is the king? said Balin. Abide, said Merlin, here in a straight way ye shall meet with him; and therewith he showed Balin and his brother where he rode. Anon Balin and his brother met with the king, and smote him down, and wounded him fiercely, and laid him to the ground; and there they slew on the right hand and the left hand, and slew more than forty of his men, and the remnant fled. Then went they again to King Rience and would have slain him had he not yielded him unto their grace. Then said he thus: Knights full of prowess, slay me not, for by my life ye may win, and by my death ye shall win nothing. Then said these two knights, Ye say sooth and truth, and so laid him on a horse-litter. With that Merlin was vanished, and came to King Arthur aforehand, and told him how his most enemy was taken and discomfited. By whom? said King Arthur. By two knights,

and bring him to Arthur

said Merlin, that would please your lordship, and to-morrow ye shall know what knights they are. Anon after came the knight with the two swords and Balan his brother, and brought with them King Rience of North Wales, and there delivered him to the porters, and charged them with him; and so they two returned again in the dawning of the day. King Arthur came then to King Rience, and said, Sir king, ye are welcome: by what adventure come ye hither? Sir, said King Rience, I came hither by an hard adventure. Who won you? said King Arthur. Sir, said the king, the knight with the two swords and his brother, which are two marvellous knights of prowess. I know them not, said Arthur, but much I am beholden to them. Ah, said Merlin, I shall tell you: it is Balin that achieved the sword, and his brother Balan, a good knight, there liveth not a better of prowess and of worthiness, and it shall be the greatest dole of him that ever I knew of knight, for he shall not long endure. Alas, said King Arthur, that is great pity; for I am much beholden unto him, and I have ill deserved it unto him for his kindness. Nay, said Merlin, he shall do much more for you, and that shall ye know in haste. But, sir, are ye purveyed, said Merlin, for to-morn the host of Nero, King Rience's brother, will set on you or noon with a great host, and therefore make you ready, for I will depart from you.

Arthur does battle with Nero and King Lot

CHAPTER X. How King Arthur had a battle against Nero and King Lot of Orkney, and how King Lot was deceived by Merlin, and how twelve kings were slain. Then King Arthur made ready his host in ten battles, and Nero was ready in the field afore the Castle Terrabil with a great host, and he had ten battles, with many more people than Arthur had. Then Nero had the vanguard with the most part of his people, and Merlin came to King Lot of the Isle of Orkney, and held him with a tale of prophecy, till Nero and his people were destroyed. And there Sir Kay the Seneschal did passingly well, that the days of his life the worship went never from him; and Sir Hervis de Revel did marvellous deeds with King Arthur, and King Arthur slew that day twenty knights and maimed forty. At that time came in the knight with the two swords and his brother Balan, but they two did so marvellously that the king and all the knights marvelled of them, and all they that beheld them said they were sent from heaven as angels, or devils from hell; and King Arthur said himself they were the best knights that ever he saw, for they gave such strokes that all men had wonder of them. In the meanwhile came one to King Lot, and told him while he tarried there Nero was destroyed and slain with all his people. Alas, said King Lot, I am ashamed, for by my default there is many a worshipful man slain, for an we had been together there had been none host under the heaven that had been able for to have matched

with us; this faiter with his prophecy hath mocked me. All that did Merlin, for he knew well that an King Lot had been with his body there at the first battle, King Arthur had been slain, and all his people destroyed; and well Merlin knew that one of the kings should be dead that day, and loath was Merlin that any of them both should be slain; but of the twain, he had liefer King Lot had been slain than King Arthur. Now what is best to do? said King Lot of Orkney; whether is me better to treat with King Arthur or to fight, for the greater part of our people are slain and destroyed? Sir, said a knight, set on Arthur for they are weary and forfoughten and we be fresh. As for me, said King Lot, I would every knight would do his part as I would do mine. And then they advanced banners and smote together and all to-shivered their spears; and Arthur's knights, with the help of the knight with the two swords and his brother Balan put King Lot and his host to the worse. But always King Lot held him in the foremost front, and did marvellous deeds of arms, for all his host was borne up by his hands, for he abode all knights. Alas he might not endure, the which was great pity, that so worthy a knight as he was one should be overmatched, that of late time afore had been a knight of King Arthur's, and wedded the sister of King Arthur; and for King Arthur lay by King Lot's wife, the which was Arthur's sister, and gat on her Mordred, therefore King Lot held against Arthur. So there was a knight that was called

The fight

Arthur gains the day

the knight with the strange beast, and at that time his right name was called Pellinore, the which was a good man of prowess, and he smote a mighty stroke at King Lot as he fought with all his enemies, and he failed of his stroke, and smote the horse's neck, that he fell to the ground with King Lot; and therewith anon Pellinore smote him a great stroke through the helm and head unto the brows. And then all the host of Orkney fled for the death of King Lot, and there were slain many mothers' sons. But King Pellinore bare the wite of the death of King Lot, wherefore Sir Gawaine revenged the death of his father the tenth year after he was made knight, and slew King Pellinore with his own hands. Also there were slain at that battle twelve kings on the side of King Lot with Nero, and all were buried in the Church of Saint Stephen's in Camelot, and the remnant of knights and of others were buried in a great rock.

CHAPTER XI. Of the interment of twelve kings, and of the prophecy of Merlin, and how Balin should give the dolorous stroke.

So at the interment came King Lot's wife Margawse with her four sons, Gawaine, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Gareth. Also there came thither King Uriens, Sir Ewaine's father, and Morgan le Fay his wife that was King Arthur's sister. All these came to the interment. But of all these twelve kings, King Arthur let make the tomb of King Lot passing richly, and made

his tomb by his own; and then Arthur let make twelve images of laton and copper, and over-gilt it with gold, in the sign of twelve kings, and each one of them held a taper of wax that burnt day and night; and King Arthur was made in sign of a figure standing above them with a sword drawn in his hand, and all the twelve figures had countenance like unto men that were overcome. All this made Merlin by his subtle craft, and there he told the king, When I am dead these tapers shall burn no longer, and soon after the adventures of the Sangreal shall come among you and be achieved. Also he told Arthur how Balin the worshipful knight shall give the dolorous stroke, whereof shall fall great vengeance. Oh, where is Balin and Balan and Pellinore? said King Arthur. As for Pellinore, said Merlin, he will meet with you soon; and as for Balin he will not be long from you; but the other brother will depart, ye shall see him no more. By my faith, said Arthur, they are two marvellous knights, and namely Balin passeth of prowess of any knight that ever I found, for much beholden am I unto him; would God he would abide with me. Sir, said Merlin, look ye keep well the scabbard of Excalibur, for ye shall lose no blood while ye have the scabbard upon you, though ye have as many wounds upon you as ye may have. So after, for great trust, Arthur betook the scabbard to Morgan le Fay his sister, and she loved another knight better than her husband King Uriens or King Arthur, and she would have had Arthur her brother slain,

The burial of the twelve kings

Morgan le Fay's treachery

and therefore she let make another scabbard like it by enchantment, and gave the scabbard Excalibur to her love; and the knight's name was called Accolon, that after had near slain King Arthur. After this Merlin told unto King Arthur of the prophecy that there should be a great battle beside Salisbury, and Mordred his own son should be against him. Also he told him that Basdemegus was his cousin, and germain unto King Uriens.

CHAPTER XII. How a sorrowful knight came before Arthur, and how Balin fetched him, and how that knight was slain by a knight invisible. Within a day or two King Arthur was somewhat sick, and he let pitch his pavilion in a meadow, and there he laid him down on a pallet to sleep, but he might have no rest. Right so he heard a great noise of an horse, and therewith the king looked out at the porch of the pavilion, and saw a knight coming even by him and making great dole. Abide, fair sir, said Arthur, and tell me wherefore thou makest this sorrow. Ye may little amend me, said the knight, and so passed forth to the castle of Meliot. Anon after there came Balin, and when he saw King Arthur he alit off his horse, and came to the king on foot, and saluted him. By my head, said Arthur, ye be welcome. Sir, right now came riding this way a knight making great mourn, for what cause I cannot tell; wherefore I would desire of you of your courtesy and of your gentleness to fetch again

The invisible knight

that knight either by force or else by his good will. I will do more for your lordship than that, said Balin; and so he rode more than a pace, and found the knight with a damosel in a forest, and said, Sir knight, ye must come with me unto King Arthur, for to tell him of your sorrow. That will I not, said the knight, for it will scathe me greatly, and do you none avail. Sir, said Balin, I pray you make you ready, for ye must go with me, or else I must fight with you and bring you by force, and that were me loath to do. Will ye be my warrant, said the knight, an I go with you? Yea, said Balin, or else I will die therefore. And so he made him ready to go with Balin, and left the damosel still. And as they were even afore King Arthur's pavilion, there came one invisible, and smote this knight that went with Balin throughout the body with a spear. Alas, said the knight, I am slain under your conduct with a knight called Garlon; therefore take my horse that is better than yours, and ride to the damosel, and follow the quest that I was in as she will lead you, and revenge my death when ye may. That shall I do, said Balin, and that I make a vow unto knighthood; and so he departed from this knight with great sorrow. So King Arthur let bury this knight richly, and made a mention on his tomb, how there was slain Herlews le Berbeus, and by whom the treachery was done, the knight Garlon. But ever the damosel bare the truncheon of the spear with her that Sir Herlews was slain withal.

slays two knights

CHAPTER XIII. How Balin and the damosel met with a knight which was in likewise slain, and how the damosel bled for the custom of a castle. So Balin and the damosel rode into a forest, and there met with a knight that had been a-hunting, and that knight asked Balin for what cause he made so great sorrow. Me list not to tell you, said Balin. Now, said the knight, an I were armed as ye be I would fight with you. That should little need, said Balin, I am not afeard to tell you, and told him all the cause how it was. Ah, said the knight, is this all? here I ensure you by the faith of my body never to depart from you while my life lasteth And so they went to the hostelry and armed them, and so rode forth with Balin. And as they came by an hermitage even by a churchyard, there came the knight Garlon invisible, and smote this knight, Perin de Mountbeliard, through the body with a spear. Alas, said the knight, I am slain by this traitor knight that rideth invisible. Alas, said Balin, it is not the first despite he hath done me; and there the hermit and Balin buried the knight under a rich stone and a tomb royal. And on the morn they found letters of gold written, how Sir Gawaine shall revenge his father's death, King Lot, on the King Pellinore. Anon after this Balin and the damosel rode till they came to a castle, and there Balin alit, and he and the damosel went to go into the castle, and anon as Balin came within the castle's gate the portcullis fell down at his back, and there fell many men about the damosel, and would have slain her.

When Balin saw that, he was sore aggrieved, for he might not help the damosel; and then he went up into the tower, and leapt over the walls into the ditch, and hurt him not; and anon he pulled out his sword and would have foughten with them. And they all said nay, they would not fight with him, for they did nothing but the old custom of the castle, and told him how their lady was sick, and had lain many years, and she might not be whole but if she had a dish of silver full of blood of a clean maid and a king's daughter; and therefore the custom of this castle is, there shall no damosel pass this way but she shall bleed of her blood in a silver dish full. Well, said Balin, she shall bleed as much as she may bleed, but I will not lose the life of her whiles my life lasteth. And so Balin made her to bleed by her good will, but her blood helped not the lady. And so he and she rested there all night, and had there right good cheer, and on the morn they passed on their ways. And as it telleth after in the Sangreal, that Sir Percivale's sister helped that lady with her blood, whereof she was dead.

The custom of the castle

CHAPTER XIV. How Balin met with that knight named Garlon at a feast, and there he slew him to have his blood to heal therewith the son of his host. Then they rode three or four days and never met with adventure, and by hap they were lodged with a gentle man that was a rich man and well at ease. And as they sat at their supper Balin overheard one complain grievously by him in a chair. What

Balin meets with the invisible knight

is this noise? said Balin. Forsooth, said his host, I will tell you. I was but late at a jousting, and there I jousted with a knight that is brother unto King Pellam, and twice smote I him down, and then he promised to requite me on my best friend; and so he wounded my son, that cannot be whole till I have of that knight's blood, and he rideth always invisible, but I know not his name. Ah! said Balin, I know that knight, his name is Garlon, he hath slain two knights of mine in the same manner, therefore I had liefer meet with that knight than all the gold in this realm, for the despite he hath done me. Well, said his host, I shall tell you, King Pellam of Listeneise hath made do cry in all this country a great feast that shall be within these twenty days, and no knight may come there but if he bring his wife with him, or his paramour; and that knight, your enemy and mine, ye shall see that day. Then I behote you, said Balin, part of his blood to heal your son withal. We will be forward to-morn, said his host. So on the morn they rode all three toward Pellam, and they had fifteen days' journey or they came thither; and that same day began the great feast. And so they alit and stabled their horses, and went into the castle; but Balin's host might not be let in because he had no lady. Then Balin was well received and brought unto a chamber and unarmed him, and there were brought him robes to his pleasure, and would have had Balin leave his sword behind him. Nay, said Balin, that do I not, for it is the custom of my country a

knight always to keep his weapon with him, and that custom will I keep, or else I will depart as I came. Then they gave him leave to wear his sword, and so he went unto the castle, and was set among knights of worship, and his lady afore him. Soon Balin asked a knight, Is there not a knight in this court whose name is Garlon? Yonder he goeth, said a knight, he with the black face; he is the marvellest knight that is now living, for he destroyeth many good knights, for he goeth invisible. Ah well, said Balin, is that he? Then Balin advised him long: If I slay him here I shall not escape, and if I leave him now, peradventure I shall never meet with him again at such a steven, and much harm he will do an he live. Therewith this Garlon espied that this Balin beheld him, and then he came and smote Balin on the face with the back of his hand, and said, Knight, why beholdest me so? for shame therefore, eat thy meat and do that thou came for. Thou sayest sooth, said Balin, this is not the first despite that thou hast done me, and therefore I will do what I came for, and rose up fiercely and clave his head to the shoulders. Give me the truncheon, said Balin to his lady, wherewith he slew your knight. Anon she gave it him, for always she bare the truncheon with her. And therewith Balin smote him through the body, and said openly, With that truncheon thou has slain a good knight, and now it sticketh in thy body. And then Balin called unto him his host, saying, Now may ye fetch blood enough to heal your son withal.

and slays him

Balin smites the dolorous stroke

CHAPTER XV. How Balin fought with King Pellam, and how his sword brake, and how he gat a spear wherewith he smote the dolorous stroke. Anon all the knights arose from the table for to set on Balin, and King Pellam himself arose up fiercely, and said, Knight, hast thou slain my brother? thou shalt die therefore or thou depart. Well, said Balin, do it yourself. Yes, said King Pellam, there shall no man have ado with thee but myself, for the love of my brother. Then King Pellam caught in his hand a grim weapon and smote eagerly at Balin; but Balin put the sword betwixt his head and the stroke, and therewith his sword burst in sunder. And when Balin was weaponless he ran into a chamber for to seek some weapon, and so from chamber to chamber, and no weapon he could find, and always King Pellam after him. And at the last he entered into a chamber that was marvellously well dight and richly, and a bed arrayed with cloth of gold the richest that might be thought, and one lying therein, and thereby stood a table of clean gold with four pillars of silver that bare up the table, and upon the table stood a marvellous spear strangely wrought. And when Balin saw that spear, he gat it in his hand and turned him to King Pellam, and smote him passingly sore with that spear, that King Pellam fell down in a swoon, and therewith the castle roof and walls brake and fell to the earth, and Balin fell down so that he might not stir foot nor hand. And so the most part of the castle, that was fallen down through that

dolorous stroke, lay upon Pellam and Balin three days.

He is saved by Merlin

CHAPTER XVI. How Balin was delivered by Merlin, and saved a knight that would have slain himself for love. Then Merlin came thither and took up Balin, and gat him a good horse, for his was dead, and bade him ride out of that country. I would have my damosel, said Balin. Lo, said Merlin, where she lieth dead. And King Pellam lay so, many years sore wounded, and might never be whole till Galahad the haughty prince healed him in the quest of the Sangreal, for in that place was part of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Joseph of Arimathea brought into this land, and there himself lay in that rich bed. And that was the same spear that Longius smote our Lord to the heart; and King Pellam was nigh of Joseph's kin, and that was the most worshipful man that lived in those days, and great pity it was of his hurt, for through that stroke, turned to great dole, tray and tene. Then departed Balin from Merlin, and said, In this world we meet never no more. So he rode forth through the fair countries and cities, and found the people dead, slain on every side. And all that were alive cried, O Balin, thou hast caused great damage in these countries; for the dolorous stroke thou gavest unto King Pellam, three countries are destroyed, and doubt not but the vengeance will fall on thee at the last. When Balin was past those countries he

Balin saves a knight

was passing fain. So he rode eight days or he met with adventure. And at the last he came into a fair forest in a valley, and was ware of a tower, and there beside he saw a great horse of war, tied to a tree, and there beside sat a fair knight on the ground and made great mourning, and he was a likely man, and a well made. Balin said, God save you, why be ye so heavy? tell me and I will amend it, an I may to my power. Sir knight, said he again, thou doest me great grief, for I was in merry thoughts, and now thou puttest me to more pain. Balin went a little from him, and looked on his horse; then heard Balin him say thus: Ah, fair lady, why have ye broken my promise, for thou promisest me to meet me here by noon, and I may curse thee that ever ye gave me this sword, for with this sword I slay myself, and pulled it out. And therewith Balin sterte unto him and took him by the hand. Let go my hand, said the knight, or else I shall slay thee. That shall not need, said Balin, for I shall promise you my help to get you your lady, an ye will tell me where she is. What is your name? said the knight. My name is Balin le Savage. Ah, sir, I know you well enough, ye are the knight with the two swords, and the man of most prowess of your hands living. What is your name? said Balin. My name is Garnish of the Mount, a poor man's son, but by my prowess and hardiness a duke hath made me knight, and gave me lands; his name is Duke Hermel, and his daughter is she that I love, and she me as I deemed. How far is she

hence? said Balin. But six mile, said the knight. Now ride we hence, said these two knights. So they rode more than a pace, till that they came to a fair castle well walled and ditched. I will into the castle, said Balin, and look if she be there. So he went in and searched from chamber to chamber, and found her bed, but she was not there. Then Balin looked into a fair little garden, and under a laurel tree he saw her lie upon a quilt of green samite and a knight in her arms, fast halsing either other, and under their heads grass and herbs. When Balin saw her lie so with the foulest knight that ever he saw, and she a fair lady, then Balin went through all the chambers again, and told the knight how he found her as she had slept fast, and so brought him in the place where she lay fast sleeping.

The knight slays himself for love

CHAPTER XVII. How that knight slew his love and a knight lying by her, and after, how he slew himself with his own sword, and how Balin rode toward a castle where he lost his life. And when Garnish beheld her so lying, for pure sorrow his mouth and nose burst out a-bleeding, and with his sword he smote off both their heads, and then he made sorrow out of measure, and said, O Balin, much sorrow hast thou brought unto me, for hadst thou not shewed me that sight I should have passed my sorrow. Forsooth, said Balin, I did it to this intent that it should better thy courage, and that ye might see and know her

Balin enters a castle

falsehood, and to cause you to leave love of such a lady; God knoweth I did none other but as I would ye did to me. Alas, said Garnish, now is my sorrow double that I may not endure, now have I slain that I most loved in all my life; and therewith suddenly he rove himself on his own sword unto the hilts. When Balin saw that, he dressed him thenceward, lest folk would say he had slain them; and so he rode forth, and within three days he came by a cross, and thereon were letters of gold written, that said, It is not for no knight alone to ride toward this castle. Then saw he an old hoar gentleman coming toward him, that said, Balin le Savage, thou passest thy bounds to come this way, therefore turn again and it will avail thee. And he vanished away anon; and so he heard an horn blow as it had been the death of a beast. That blast, said Balin, is blown for me, for I am the prize and yet am I not dead. Anon withal he saw an hundred ladies and many knights, that welcomed him with fair semblance, and made him passing good cheer unto his sight, and led him into the castle, and there was dancing and minstrelsy and all manner of joy. Then the chief lady of the castle said, Knight with the two swords, ye must have ado and joust with a knight hereby that keepeth an island, for there may no man pass this way but he must joust or he pass. That is an unhappy custom, said Balin, that a knight may not pass this way but if he joust. Ye shall not have ado but with one knight, said the lady. Well, said Balin, sine I shall

thereto I am ready, but travelling men are oft weary and their horses too; but though my horse be weary my heart is not weary, I would be fain there my death should be. Sir, said a knight to Balin, methinketh your shield is not good, I will lend you a bigger, thereof I pray you. And so he took the shield that was unknown and left his own, and so rode unto the island, and put him and his horse in a great boat; and when he came on the other side he met with a damosel, and she said, O knight Balin, why have ye left your own shield? alas ye have put yourself in great danger, for by your shield ye should have been known; it is great pity of you as ever was of knight, for of thy prowess and hardiness thou hast no fellow living. Me repenteth, said Balin, that ever I came within this country, but I may not turn now again for shame, and what adventure shall fall to me, be it life or death, I will take the adventure that shall come to me. And then he looked on his armour, and understood he was well armed, and therewith blessed him and mounted upon his horse.

He changes his shield

CHAPTER XVIII. How Balin met with his brother Balan, and how each of them slew other unknown, till they were wounded to death. Then afore him he saw come riding out of a castle a knight, and his horse trapped all red, and himself in the same colour. When this knight in the red beheld Balin, him thought it should be his brother

He fights with his brother

Balin by cause of his two swords, but by cause he knew not his shield he deemed it was not he. And so they aventryd their spears and came marvellously fast together, and they smote each other in the shields, but their spears and their course were so big that it bare down horse and man that they lay both in a swoon. But Balin was bruised sore with the fall of his horse, for he was weary of travel. And Balan was the first that rose on foot and drew his sword, and went toward Balin, and he arose and went against him; but Balan smote Balin first, and he put up his shield and smote him through the shield and tamed his helm. Then Balin smote him again with that unhappy sword, and well nigh had felled his brother Balan, and so they fought there together till their breaths failed. Then Balin looked up to the castle and saw the towers stand full of ladies. So they went unto battle again, and wounded every each other dolefully, and then they breathed ofttimes, and so went unto battle that all the place there as they fought was blood red. And at that time there was none of them both but they had either smitten other seven great wounds, so that the least of them might have been the death of the mightiest giant in this world. Then they went to battle again so marvellously that doubt it was to hear of that battle for the great blood-shedding, and their hauberks unnailed that naked they were on every side. At last Balan the younger brother withdrew him a little and laid him down. Then said Balin le Savage, What knight art thou? for or now I found never no knight that matched

me. My name is, said he, Balan, brother unto the good knight, Balin. Alas, said Balin, that ever I should see this day, and therewith he fell backward in a swoon. Then Balan yede on all four feet and hands, and put off the helm of his brother, and might not know him by the visage it was so ful hewn and bledde; but when he awoke he said, O Balan, my brother, thou hast slain me and I thee, wherefore all the wide world shall speak of us both. Alas, said Balan, that ever I saw this day, that through mishap I might not know you, for I espied well your two swords, but by cause ye had another shield I deemed ye had been another knight. Alas, said Balin, all that made an unhappy knight in the castle, for he caused me to leave my own shield to our both's destruction, and if I might live I would destroy that castle for ill customs. That were well done, said Balan, for I had never grace to depart from them sine that I came hither, for here it happed me to slay a knight that kept this island, and syne might I never depart, and no more should ye, brother, an ye might have slain me as ye have, and escaped yourself with the life. Right so came the lady of the tower with four knights and six ladies and six yeomen unto them, and there she heard how they made their moan either to other, and said, We came both out of one tomb, that is to say one mother's belly, and so shall we lie both in one pit. So Balan prayeellare lady of her gentleness, for his true service, that she would bury them both in that same place where the battle was done. And she p· Alas,

They slay one another

and are buried in one tomb

them with weeping it should be done richly in the best manner. Now, will ye send for a priest, that we may receive our sacrament, and receive the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ? Yea, said the lady, it shall be done; and so she sent for a priest and gave them their rites. Now, said Balin, when we are buried in one tomb, and the mention made over us how two brethren slew each other, there will never good knight nor good man see our tomb but they will pray for our souls. And so all the ladies and gentlewomen wept for pity. Then anon Balan died, but Balin died not till the midnight after, and so were they buried both, and the lady let make a mention of Balan how he was there slain by his brother's hands, but she knew not Balin's name.

CHAPTER XIX. How Merlin buried them both in one tomb, and of Balin's sword. In the morning came Merlin and let write Balin's name on the tomb with letters of gold, that here lieth Balin le Savage that was the knight with the two swords, and he that smote the dolorous stroke. Also Merlin let make there a bed, that there should never man lie therein but he went out of his wit, yet Launcelot de Lake fordid that bed through his noblesse. And anon after Balin was dead, Merlin took fiery sword, and took off the pommel and set on another pommel. So Merlin bade a knight that stood afore him handle that sword, and he [illegible] or [illegible]d, and he might not handle it. Then

Merlin laughed. Why laugh ye? said the knight. This is the cause, said Merlin: there shall never man handle this sword but the best knight of the world, and that shall be Sir Launcelot or else Galahad his son, and Launcelot with this sword shall slay the man that in the world he loved best, that shall be Sir Gawaine. All this he let write in the pommel of the sword. Then Merlin let make a bridge of iron and of steel into that island, and it was but half a foot broad, and there shall never man pass that bridge, nor have hardiness to go over, but if he were a passing good man and a good knight without treachery or villainy. Also the scabbard of Balin's sword Merlin left it on this side the island, that Galahad should find it. Also Merlin let make by his subtilty that Balin's sword was put in a marble stone standing upright as great as a mill stone, and the stone hoved always above the water and did many years, and so by adventure it swam down the stream to the City of Camelot, that is in English Winchester. And that same day Galahad the haughty prince came with King Arthur, and so Galahad brought with him the scabbard and achieved the sword that was there in the marble stone hoving upon the water. And on Whitsunday he achieved the sword as it is rehearsed in the book of Sangreal. Soon after this was done Merlin came to King Arthur and told him of the dolorous stroke that Balin gave to King Pellam, and how Balin and Balan fought together the marvellest battle that ever was heard of, and how they were buried both in one tomb. Alas,

Balin's sword

achieved by Galahad

said King Arthur, this is the greatest pity that ever I heard tell of two knights, for in the world I know not such two knights. Thus endeth the tale of Balin and of Balan, two brethren born in Northumberland, good knights.

Sequitur iii. liber

BOOK III

CHAPTER I. How King Arthur took a wife, and wedded Guenever, daughter to Leodegrance, King of the Land of Cameliard, with whom he had the Round Table.

Arthur chooses a wife

In the beginning of Arthur, after he was chosen king by adventure and by grace; for the most part of the barons knew not that he was Uther Pendragon's son, but as Merlin made it openly known. But yet many kings and lords held great war against him for that cause, but well Arthur overcame them all, for the most part the days of his life he was ruled much by the counsel of Merlin. So it fell on a time King Arthur said unto Merlin, My barons will let me have no rest, but needs I must take a wife, and I will none take but by thy counsel and by thine advice. It is well done, said Merlin, that ye take a wife, for a man of your bounty and noblesse should not be without a wife. Now is there any that ye love more than another? Yea, said King Arthur, I love Guenever the king's daughter, Leodegrance of the land of Cameliard, the which holdeth in his house the Table Round that ye told he had of my father Uther. And this damosel is the most valiant and fairest lady that I know living, or yet that ever I could find. Sir, said Merlin, as of her beauty and fairness she is one of the fairest a-live, but, an

Merlin sent as ambassador to Leodegrance

ye loved her not so well as ye do, I should find you a damosel of beauty and of goodness that should like you and please you, an your heart were not set; but there as a man's heart is set, he will be loath to return. That is truth, said King Arthur. But Merlin warned the king covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him again; and so he turned his tale to the adventures of Sangreal. Then Merlin desired of the king for to have men with him that should enquire of Guenever, and so the king granted him, and Merlin went forth unto King Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the desire of the king that he would have unto his wife Guenever his daughter. That is to me, said King Leodegrance, the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and noblesse will wed my daughter. And as for my lands, I will give him, wist I it might please him, but he hath lands enow, him needeth none, but I shall send him a gift shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round, the which Uther Pendragon gave me, and when it is full complete, there is an hundred knights and fifty. And as for an hundred good knights I have myself, but I faute fifty, for so many have been slain in my days. And so Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guenever unto Merlin, and the Table Round with the hundred knights, and so they rode freshly, with great royalty, what by water and what by land, till that they came nigh unto London.

CHAPTER II. How the Knights of the Round Table were ordained and their sieges blessed by the Bishop of Canterbury.

Guinever comes with a hundred knights of the Round Table

When King Arthur heard of the coming of Guenever and the hundred knights with the Table Round, then King Arthur made great joy for her coming, and that rich present, and said openly, This fair lady is passing welcome unto me, for I have loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so lief to me. And these knights with the Round Table please me more than right great riches. And in all haste the king let ordain for the marriage and the coronation in the most honourable wise that could be devised. Now, Merlin, said King Arthur, go thou and espy me in all this land fifty knights which be of most prowess and worship. Within short time Merlin had found such knights that should fulfil twenty and eight knights, but no more he could find. Then the Bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the sieges with great royalty and devotion, and there set the eight and twenty knights in their sieges. And when this was done Merlin said, Fair sirs, you must all arise and come to King Arthur for to do him homage; he will have the better will to maintain you. And so they arose and did their homage, and when they were gone Merlin found in every sieges letters of gold that told the knights' names that had sitten therein. But two sieges were void. And so anon came young Gawaine and asked the king a gift. Ask, said the king, and I shall

The poor cowherd

grant it you. Sir, I ask that ye will make me knight that same day ye shall wed fair Guenever. I will do it with a good will, said King Arthur, and do unto you all the worship that I may, for I must by reason ye are my nephew, my sister's son.

CHAPTER III. How a poor man riding upon a lean mare desired King Arthur to make his son knight. Forthwithal there came a poor man into the court, and brought with him a fair young man of eighteen years of age riding upon a lean mare; and the poor man asked all men that he met, Where shall I find King Arthur? Yonder he is, said the knights, wilt thou anything with him? Yea, said the poor man, therefore I came hither. Anon as he came before the king, he saluted him and said: O King Arthur, the flower of all knights and kings, I beseech Jesu save thee. Sir, it was told me that at this time of your marriage ye would give any man the gift that he would ask, out except that were unreasonable. That is truth, said the king, such cries I let make, and that will I hold, so it impair not my realm nor mine estate. Ye say well and graciously, said the poor man; Sir, I ask nothing else but that ye will make my son here a knight. It is a great thing thou askest of me, said the king. What is thy name? said the king to the poor man. Sir, my name is Aries the cowherd. Whether cometh this of thee or of thy son? said the king. Nay, sir, said Aries, this desire cometh of my son and not of me, for I shall tell

His son made knight

you I have thirteen sons, and all they will fall to what labour I put them, and will be right glad to do labour, but this child will not labour for me, for anything that my wife or I may do, but always he will be shooting or casting darts, and glad for to see battles and to behold knights, and always day and night he desireth of me to be made a knight. What is thy name? said the king unto the young man. Sir, my name is Tor. The king beheld him fast, and saw he was passingly well-visaged and passingly well made of his years. Well, said King Arthur unto Aries the cowherd, fetch all thy sons afore me that I may see them. And so the poor man did, and all were shaped much like the poor man. But Tor was not like none of them all in shape nor in countenance, for he was much more than any of them. Now, said King Arthur unto the cowherd, where is the sword he shall be made knight withal? It is here, said Tor. Take it out of the sheath, said the king, and require me to make you a knight. Then Tor alit off his mare and pulled out his sword, kneeling, and requiring the king that he would make him knight, and that he might be a knight of the Table Round. As for a knight I will make you, and therewith smote him in the neck with the sword, saying, Be ye a good knight, and so I pray to God so ye may be, and if ye be of prowess and of worthiness ye shall be a knight of the Table Round. Now Merlin, said Arthur, say whether this Tor shall be a good knight or no. Yea, sir, he ought to be a good knight, for he

Sir Tor King Pellinore's son

is come of as good a man as any is alive, and of kings' blood. How so, sir? said the king. I shall tell you, said Merlin: This poor man, Aries the cowherd, is not his father, he is nothing sib to him, for King Pellinore is his father. I suppose nay, said the cowherd. Fetch thy wife afore me, said Merlin, and she shall not say nay. Anon the wife was fetched, which was a fair housewife, and there she answered Merlin full womanly, and there she told the king and Merlin that when she was a maid, and went to milk kine, there met with her a stern knight, and half by force he had my maidenhead, and at that time he begat my son Tor, and he took away from me my greyhound that I had that time with me, and said that he would keep the greyhound for my love. Ah, said the cowherd, I weened not this, but I may believe it well, for he had never no tatches of me. Sir, said Tor unto Merlin, dishonour not my mother. Sir, said Merlin, it is more for your worship than hurt, for your father is a good man and a king, and he may right well advance you and your mother, for ye were begotten or ever she was wedded. That is truth, said the wife. It is the less grief unto me, said the cowherd.

CHAPTER IV. How Sir Tor was known for son of King Pellinore, and how Gawaine was made knight. So on the morn King Pellinore came to the court of King Arthur, which had great joy of him, and told him of Tor, how he was his son, and how he had

made him knight at the request of the cowherd. When Pellinore beheld Tor, he pleased him much. So the king made Gawaine knight, but Tor was the first he made at the feast. What is the cause, said King Arthur, that there be two places void in the sieges? Sir, said Merlin, there shall no man sit in those places but they that shall be of most worship. But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow. And therewith Merlin took King Pellinore by the hand, and in the one hand next the two sieges and the Siege Perilous he said, in open audience, This is your place and best ye are worthy to sit therein of any that is here. Thereat sat Sir Gawaine in great envy and told Gaheris his brother, yonder knight is put to great worship, the which grieveth me sore, for he slew our father King Lot, therefore I will slay him, said Gawaine, with a sword that was sent me that is passing trenchant. Ye shall not so, said Gaheris, at this time, for at this time I am but a squire, and when I am made knight I would be avenged on him, and therefore, brother, it is best ye suffer till another time, that we may have him out of the court, for an we did so we should trouble this high feast. I will well, said Gawaine, as ye will.

Gawaine made knight

The wedding feast

CHAPTER V. How at feast of the wedding of King Arthur to Guenever, a white hart came into the hall, and thirty couple hounds, and how a brachet pinched the hart which was taken away. Then was the high feast made ready, and the king was wedded at Camelot unto Dame Guenever in the church of Saint Stephen's, with great solemnity. And as every man was set after his degree, Merlin went to all the knights of the Round Table, and bade them sit still, that none of them remove. For ye shall see a strange and a marvellous adventure. Right so as they sat there came running in a white hart into the hall, and a white brachet next him, and thirty couple of black running hounds came after with a great cry, and the hart went about the Table Round as he went by other boards, the white brachet bit him by the buttock and pulled out a piece, wherethrough the hart leapt a great leap and overthrew a knight that sat at the board side, and therewith the knight arose and took up the brachet, and so went forth out of the hall, and took his horse and rode his way with the brachet. Right so anon came in a lady on a white palfrey, and cried aloud to King Arthur, Sir, suffer me not to have this despite, for the brachet was mine that the knight led away. I may not do therewith, said the king. With this there came a knight riding all armed on a great horse, and took the lady away with him with force, and ever she cried and made great dole. When she was gone the king was glad, for she made such

a noise. Nay, said Merlin, ye may not leave these adventures so lightly, for these adventures must be brought again or else it would be disworship to you and to your feast. I will, said the king, that all be done by your advice. Then, said Merlin, let call Sir Gawaine, for he must bring again the white hart. Also, sir, ye must let call Sir Tor, for he must bring again the brachet and the knight, or else slay him. Also let call King Pellinore, for he must bring again the lady and the knight, or else slay him. And these three knights shall do marvellous adventures or they come again. Then were they called all three as it rehearseth afore, and every each of them took his charge, and armed them surely. But Sir Gawaine had the first request, and therefore we will begin at him.

The adventure of the white hart

CHAPTER VI. How Sir Gawaine rode for to fetch again the hart, and how two brethren fought each against other for the hart. Sir Gawaine rode more than a pace, and Gaheris his brother that rode with him instead of a squire to do him service. So as they rode they saw two knights fight on horseback passing sore, so Sir Gawaine and his brother rode betwixt them, and asked them for what cause they fought so. The one knight answered and said, We fight for a simple matter, for we two be two brethren born and begotten of one man and of one woman. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, why do ye so? Sir, said the elder, there came a white hart this way

Gawaine rides between the fighting brothers

this day, and many hounds chased him, and a white brachet was always next him, and we understood it was adventure made for the high feast of King Arthur, and therefore I would have gone after to have won me worship; and here my younger brother said he would go after the hart, for he was better knight than I: and for this cause we fell at debate, and so we thought to prove which of us both was better knight. This is a simple cause, said Sir Gawaine; uncouth men ye should debate withal, and not brother with brother; therefore but if you will do by my counsel I will have ado with you, that is ye shall yield you unto me, and that ye go unto King Arthur and yield you unto his grace. Sir knight, said the two brethren, we are forfoughten and much blood have we lost through our wilfulness, and therefore we would be loth to have ado with you. Then do as I will have you, said Sir Gawaine. We will agree to fulfil your will; but by whom shall we say that we be thither sent? Ye may say, By the knight that followeth the quest of the hart that was white. Now what is your name? said Gawaine. Sorlouse of the Forest, said the elder. And my name is, said the younger, Brian of the Forest. And so they departed and went to the king's court, and Sir Gawaine on his quest. And as Gawaine followed the hart by the cry of the hounds, even afore him there was a great river, and the hart swam over; and as Sir Gawaine would follow after, there stood a knight over the other side, and said, Sir knight, come not over after this hart but if

thou wilt joust with me. I will not fail as for that, said Sir Gawaine, to follow the quest that I am in, and so made his horse to swim over the water. And anon they gat their spears and ran together full hard; but Sir Gawaine smote him off his horse, and then he turned his horse and bade him yield him. Nay, said the knight, not so, though thou have the better of me on horseback. I pray thee, valiant knight, alight afoot, and match we together with swords. What is your name? said Sir Gawaine. Allardin of the Isles, said the other. Then either dressed their shields and smote together, but Sir Gawaine smote him so hard through the helm that it went to the brains, and the knight fell down dead. Ah! said Gaheris, that was a mighty stroke of a young knight.

The quest after the white hart

CHAPTER VII. How the hart was chased into a castle and there slain, and how Sir Gawaine slew a lady. Then Gawaine and Gaheris rode more than a pace after the white hart, and let slip at the hart three couple of greyhounds, and so they chased the hart into a castle, and in the chief place of the castle they slew the hart; Sir Gawaine and Gaheris followed after. Right so there came a knight out of a chamber with a sword drawn in his hand and slew two of the greyhounds, even in the sight of Sir Gawaine, and the remnant he chased them with his sword out of the castle. And when he came again, he said, O my white hart, me repenteth that thou art dead, for my sovereign lady gave thee to me, and evil have I

Gawaine slays a lady

kept thee, and thy death shall be dear bought an I live. And anon he went into his chamber and armed him, and came out fiercely, and there met he with Sir Gawaine. Why have ye slain my hounds? said Sir Gawaine, for they did but their kind, and liefer I had ye had wroken your anger upon me than upon a dumb beast. Thou sayest truth, said the knight, I have avenged me on thy hounds, and so I will on thee or thou go. Then Sir Gawaine alit afoot and dressed his shield, and they struck together mightily, and clave their shields, and stoned their helms, and brake their hauberks that the blood ran down to their feet At last Sir Gawaine smote the knight so hard that he fell to the earth, and then he cried mercy, and yielded him, and besought him as he was a knight and gentleman, to save his life. Thou shalt die, said Sir Gawaine, for slaying of my hounds. I will make amends, said the knight, unto my power. Sir Gawaine would no mercy have but unlaced his helm to have stricken off his head. Right so came his lady out of a chamber and fell over him, and so he smote off her head by misadventure. Alas, said Gaheris, that is foully and shamefully done, that shame shall never from you; also ye should give mercy unto them that ask mercy, for a knight without mercy is without worship. Sir Gawaine was so stonied of the death of this fair lady that he wist not what he did, and said unto the knight, Arise, I will give thee mercy. Nay, nay, said the knight, I take no force of mercy now, for thou hast slain my love and my lady

that I loved best of all earthly things. Me sore repenteth it, said Sir Gawaine, for I thought to strike unto thee; but now thou shalt go unto King Arthur and tell him of thine adventures, and how thou art overcome by the knight that went in the quest of the white hart. I take no force, said the knight, whether I live or I die; but so for dread of death he swore to go unto King Arthur, and he made him to bear one greyhound before him on his horse, and another behind him. What is your name? said Sir Gawaine, or we depart. My name is, said the knight, Ablamar of the Marsh. So he departed toward Camelot.

Gawaine and Gaheris fight four knights

CHAPTER VIII. How four knights fought against Gawaine and Gaheris, and how they were overcome, and their lives saved at request of four ladies. And Sir Gawaine went into the castle, and made him ready to lie there all night, and would have unarmed him. What will ye do, said Gaheris, will ye unarm you in this country? Ye may think ye have many enemies here. They had not sooner said that word but there came four knights well armed, and assailed Sir Gawaine hard, and said unto him, Thou new-made knight, thou hast shamed thy knighthood, for a knight without mercy is dishonoured. Also thou hast slain a fair lady to thy great shame to the world's end, and doubt thou not thou shalt have great need of mercy or thou depart from us. And therewith one of them smote Sir Gawaine a great stroke that nigh he fell to the earth,

who overcome them

and Gaheris smote him again sore, and so they were on the one side and on the other, that Sir Gawaine and Gaheris were in jeopardy of their lives; and one with a bow, an archer, smote Sir Gawaine through the arm that it grieved him wonderly sore. And as they should have been slain, there came four fair ladies, and besought the knights of grace for Sir Gawaine; and goodly at request of the ladies they gave Sir Gawaine and Gaheris their lives, and made them to yield them as prisoners. Then Gawaine and Gaheris made great dole. Alas! said Sir Gawaine, mine arm grieveth me sore, I am like to be maimed; and so made his complaint piteously. Early on the morrow there came to Sir Gawaine one of the four ladies that had heard all his complaint, and said, Sir knight, what cheer? Not good, said he. It is your own default, said the lady, for ye have done a passing foul deed in the slaying of the lady, the which will be great villainy unto you. But be ye not of King Arthur's kin? said the lady. Yes truly, said Sir Gawaine. What is your name? said the lady, ye must tell it me or ye pass. My name is Gawaine, the King Lot of Orkney's son, and my mother is King Arthur's sister. Ah! then are ye nephew unto King Arthur, said the lady, and I shall so speak for you that ye shall have conduct to go to King Arthur for his love. And so she departed and told the four knights how their prisoner was King Arthur's nephew, and his name is Sir Gawaine, King Lot's son of Orkney. And they gave him the hart's head because it was

in his quest. Then anon they delivered Sir Gawaine under this promise, that he should bear the dead lady with him in this manner; the head of her was hanged about his neck, and the whole body of her lay before him on his horse's mane. Right so rode he forth unto Camelot. And anon as he was come, Merlin desired of King Arthur that Sir Gawaine should be sworn to tell of all his adventures, and how he slew the lady, and how he would give no mercy unto the knight, wherethrough the lady was slain. Then the king and the queen were greatly displeased with Sir Gawaine for the slaying of the lady. And there by ordinance of the queen there was set a quest of ladies on Sir Gawaine, and they judged him for ever while he lived to be with all ladies, and to fight for their quarrels; and that ever he should be courteous, and never to refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy. Thus was Gawaine sworn upon the four Evangelists that he should never be against lady nor gentlewoman, but if he fought for a lady and his adversary fought for another. And thus endeth the adventure of Sir Gawaine that he did at the marriage of King Arthur. Amen.

but spare their lives

CHAPTER IX. How Sir Tor rode after the knight with the brachet, and of his adventure by the way. When Sir Tor was ready, he mounted upon his horseback, and rode after the knight with the brachet. So as he rode he met with a dwarf suddenly that smote his horse on the head with a staff, that

Sir Tor's adventures

he went backward his spear length. Why dost thou so? said Sir Tor. For thou shalt not pass this way, but if thou joust with yonder knights of the pavilions. Then was Tor ware where two pavilions were, and great spears stood out, and two shields hung on trees by the pavilions. I may not tarry, said Sir Tor, for I am in a quest that I must needs follow. Thou shalt not pass, said the dwarf, and therewithal he blew his horn. Then there came one armed on horseback, and dressed his shield, and came fast toward Tor, and he dressed him against him, and so ran together that Tor bare him from his horse. And anon the knight yielded him to his mercy. But, sir, I have a fellow in yonder pavilion that will have ado with you anon. He shall be welcome, said Sir Tor. Then was he ware of another knight coming with great raundon, and each of them dressed to other, that marvel it was to see; but the knight smote Sir Tor a great stroke in midst of the shield that his spear all toshivered. And Sir Tor smote him through the shield below of the shield that it went through the cost of the knight, but the stroke slew him not. And therewith Sir Tor alit and smote him on the helm a great stroke, and therewith the knight yielded him and besought him of mercy. I will well, said Sir Tor, but thou and thy fellow must go unto King Arthur, and yield you prisoners unto him. By whom shall we say are we thither sent? Ye shall say by the knight that went in the quest of the knight that went with the brachet. Now,

what be your two names? said Sir Tor. My name is, said the one, Sir Felot of Langduk; and my name is, said the other, Sir Petipase of Winchelsea. Now go ye forth, said Sir Tor, and God speed you and me. Then came the dwarf and said unto Sir Tor, I pray you give me a gift. I will well, said Sir Tor, ask. I ask no more, said the dwarf, but that ye will suffer me to do you service, for I will serve no more recreant knights. Take an horse, said Sir Tor, and ride on with me. I wot ye ride after the knight with the white brachet, and I shall bring you where he is, said the dwarf. And so they rode throughout a forest, and at the last they were ware of two pavilions even by a priory with two shields, and the one shield was enewed with white, and the other shield was red.

He overcomes two knights

CHAPTER X. How Sir Tor found the brachet with a lady, and how a knight assailed him for the said brachet. Therewith Sir Tor alit and took the dwarf his glaive, and so he came to the white pavilion, and saw three damosels lie in it, on one pallet sleeping, and so he went to the other pavilion, and found a lady lying sleeping therein, but there was the white brachet that bayed at her fast, and therewith the lady yede out of the pavilion and all her damosels. But anon as Sir Tor espied the white brachet, he took her by force and took her to the dwarf. What, will ye so, said the lady, take my brachet from me? Yea, said Sir Tor, this brachet have I sought from King

and finds the brachet

Arthur's court hither. Well, said the lady, knight, ye shall not go far with her, but that ye shall be met and grieved. I shall abide what adventure that cometh by the grace of God, and so mounted upon his horse, and passed on his way toward Camelot; but it was so near night he might not pass but little further. Know ye any lodging? said Tor. I know none, said the dwarf, but here beside is an hermitage, and there ye must take lodging as ye find. And within a while they came to the hermitage and took lodging; and was there grass, oats and bread for their horses; soon it was sped, and full hard was their supper; but there they rested them all night till on the morn, and heard a mass devoutly, and took their leave of the hermit, and Sir Tor prayed the hermit to pray for him. He said he would, and betook him to God. And so he mounted upon horseback and rode towards Camelot a long while. With that they heard a knight call loud that came after them, and he said, Knight, abide and yield my brachet that thou took from my lady. Sir Tor returned again, and beheld him how he was a seemly knight and well horsed, and well armed at all points; then Sir Tor dressed his shield, and took his spear in his hands, and the other came fiercely upon him, and smote both horse and man to the earth. Anon they arose lightly and drew their swords as eagerly as lions, and put their shields afore them, and smote through the shields, that the cantels fell off both parties. Also they tamed their helms that the hot blood ran out, and the thick mails

of their hauberks they carved and roved in sunder that the hot blood ran to the earth, and both they had many wounds and were passing weary. But Sir Tor espied that the other knight fainted, and then he sued fast upon him, and doubled his strokes, and gart him go to the earth on the one side. Then Sir Tor bade him yield him. That will I not, said Abelleus, while my life lasteth and the soul is within my body, unless that thou wilt give me the brachet. That will I not do, said Sir Tor, for it was my quest to bring again thy brachet, thee, or both.

Abellus demands the brachet again

CHAPTER XI. How Sir Tor overcame the knight, and how he lost his head at the request of a lady. With that came a damosel riding on a palfrey as fast as she might drive, and cried with a loud voice unto Sir Tor. What will ye with me? said Sir Tor. I beseech thee, said the damosel, for King Arthur's love, give me a gift; I require thee gentle knight, as thou art a gentleman. Now, said Tor, ask a gift and I will give it you. Gramercy, said the damosel; now I ask the head of the false knight Abelleus, for he is the most outrageous knight that liveth, and the greatest murderer. I am loath, said Sir Tor, of that gift I have given you; let him make amends in that he hath trespassed unto you. Now, said the damosel, he may not, for he slew mine own brother before mine own eyes, that was a better knight than he, an he had had grace; and I kneeled half an hour afore him in the mire for to save my brother's life, that had done him no damage,

Sir Tor smites off his head

but fought with him by adventure of arms, and so for all that I could do he struck off his head; wherefore I require thee, as thou art a true knight, to give me my gift, or else I shall shame thee in all the court of King Arthur; for he is the falsest knight living, and a great destroyer of good knights. Then when Abelleus heard this, he was more afeard, and yielded him and asked mercy. I may not now, said Sir Tor, but if I should be found false of my promise; for while I would have taken you to mercy ye would none ask but if ye had the brachet again that was my quest. And therewith he took off his helm, and he arose and fled, and Sir Tor after him, and smote off his head quite. Now sir, said the damosel, it is near night; I pray you come and lodge with me here at my place, it is here fast by. I will well, said Sir Tor, for his horse and he had fared evil syne they departed from Camelot, and so he rode with her, and had passing good cheer with her; and she had a passing fair old knight to her husband that made him passing good cheer, and well eased both his horse and him. And on the morn he heard his mass, and brake his fast, and took his leave of the knight and of the lady, that besought him to tell them his name. Truly, he said, my name is Sir Tor that was late made knight, and this was the first quest of arms that ever I did, to bring again that this knight Abelleus took away from King Arthur's court. O fair knight, said the lady and her husband, an ye come here in our marches, come and see our poor lodging, and it shall be always at your

commandment. So Sir Tor departed and came to Camelot on the third day by noon, and the king and the queen and all the court was passing fain of his coming, and made great joy that he was come again; for he went from the court with little succour, but as King Pellinore his father gave him an old courser, and King Arthur gave him armour and a sword, and else had he none other succour, but rode so forth himself alone. And then the king and the queen by Merlin's advice made him to swear to tell of his adventures, and so he told and made proofs of his deeds as it is afore rehearsed, wherefore the king and the queen made great joy. Nay, nay, said Merlin, these be but japes to that he shall do; for he shall prove a noble knight of prowess, as good as any is living, and gentle and courteous, and of good tatches, and passing true of his promise, and never shall outrage. Wherethrough Merlin's words King Arthur gave him an earldom of lands that fell unto him. And here endeth the quest of Sir Tor, King Pellinore's son.

He returns to Camelot

CHAPTER XII. How King Pellinore rode after the lady and the knight that led her away, and how a lady desired help of him, and how he fought with two knights for that lady, of whom he slew the one at the first stroke. Then King Pellinore armed him and mounted upon his horse, and rode more than a pace after the lady that the knight led away. And as he rode in a forest, he saw in a valley a damosel sit by a well, and a wounded

King Pellinore's adventures

knight in her arms, and Pellinore saluted her. And when she was ware of him, she cried overloud, Help me, knight, for Christ's sake, King Pellinore. And he would not tarry, he was so eager in his quest, and ever she cried an hundred times after help. When she saw he would not abide, she prayed unto God to send him as much need of help as she had, and that he might feel it or he died. So, as the book telleth, the knight there died that there was wounded, wherefore the lady for pure sorrow slew herself with his sword. As King Pellinore rode in that valley he met with a poor man, a labourer. Sawest thou not, said Pellinore, a knight riding and leading away a lady? Yea, said the man, I saw that knight, and the lady that made great dole; and yonder beneath in a valley there shall ye see two pavilions, and one of the knights of the pavilions challenged that lady of that knight, and said she was his cousin near, wherefore he should lead her no farther. And so they waged battle in that quarrel, the one said he would have her by force, and the other said he would have the rule of her, by cause he was her kinsman, and would lead her to her kin. For this quarrel he left them fighting. And if ye will ride a pace ye shall find them fighting, and the lady was beleft with the two squires in the pavilions. God thank thee, said King Pellinore. Then he rode a wallop till he had a sight of the two pavilions, and the two knights fighting. Anon he rode unto the pavilions, and saw the lady that was his quest, and said, Fair lady, ye must go with me unto the court of

King Arthur. Sir knight, said the two squires that were with her, yonder are two knights that fight for this lady, go thither and depart them, and be agreed with them, and then may ye have her at your pleasure. Ye say well, said King Pellinore. And anon he rode betwixt them, and departed them, and asked them the causes why that they fought? Sir knight, said the one, I shall tell you, this lady is my kinswoman nigh, mine aunt's daughter, and when I heard her complain that she was with him maugre her head, I waged battle to fight with him. Sir knight, said the other, whose name was Hontzlake of Wentland, and this lady I gat by my prowess of arms this day at Arthur's court. That is untruly said, said King Pellinore, for ye came in suddenly there as we were at the high feast, and took away this lady or any man might make him ready, and therefore it was my quest to bring her again and you both, or else the one of us to abide in the field; therefore the lady shall go with me, or I will die for it, for I have promised it King Arthur. And therefore fight ye no more, for none of you shall have no part of her at this time, and if ye list to fight for her, fight with me, and I will defend her. Well, said the knights, make you ready, and we shall assail you with all our power. And as King Pellinore would have put his horse from them, Sir Hontzlake rove his horse through with a sword, and said: Now art thou on foot as well as we are. When King Pellinore espied that his horse was slain, lightly he leapt from his horse and pulled out his sword,

He fights for the lady

and overcomes them

and put his shield afore him, and said, Knight, keep well thy head, for thou shalt have a buffet for the slaying of my horse. So King Pellinore gave him such a stroke upon the helm that he clave the head down to the chin, that he fell to the earth dead.

CHAPTER XIII. How King Pellinore gat the lady and brought her to Camelot to the court of King Arthur. And then he turned him to the other knight that was sore wounded. But when he saw the other's buffet, he would not fight, but kneeled down and said, Take my cousin the lady with you at your request, and I require you, as ye be a true knight, put her to no shame nor villainy. What, said King Pellinore, will ye not fight for her? No, sir, said the knight, I will not fight with such a knight of prowess as ye be. Well, said Pellinore, ye say well; I promise you she shall have no villainy by me, as I am true knight; but now me lacketh an horse, said Pellinore, but I will have Hontzlake's horse. Ye shall not need, said the knight, for I shall give you such an horse as shall please you, so that you will lodge with me, for it is near night. I will well, said King Pellinore, abide with you all night. And there he had with him right good cheer, and fared of the best with passing good wine, and had merry rest that night. And on the morn he heard a mass and dined; and then was brought him a fair bay courser, and King Pellinore's saddle set upon him. Now, what shall I call you? said the knight, inasmuch as ye have my cousin

He takes the lady to Camelot

at your desire of your quest. Sir, I shall tell you, my name is King Pellinore of the Isles and knight of the Table Round. Now I am glad, said the knight, that such a noble man shall have the rule of my cousin. Now, what is your name? said Pellinore, I pray you tell me. Sir, my name is Sir Meliot of Logurs, and this lady my cousin hight Nimue, and the knight that was in the other pavilion is my sworn brother, a passing good knight, and his name is Brian of the Isles, and he is full loath to do wrong, and full loath to fight with any man, but if he be sore sought on, so that for shame he may not leave it. It is marvel, said Pellinore, that he will not have ado with me. Sir, he will not have ado with no man but if it be at his request. Bring him to the court, said Pellinore, one of these days. Sir, we will come together. And ye shall be welcome, said Pellinore, to the court of King Arthur, and greatly allowed for your coming. And so he departed with the lady, and brought her to Camelot. So as they rode in a valley it was full of stones, and there the lady's horse stumbled and threw her down, that her arm was sore bruised and near she swooned for pain. Alas! sir, said the lady, mine arm is out of lithe, wherethrough I must needs rest me. Ye shall well, said King Pellinore. And so he alit under a fair tree where was fair grass, and he put his horse thereto, and so laid him under the tree and slept till it was nigh night. And when he awoke he would have ridden. Sir, said the lady, it is so dark that ye may as well ride backward as forward.

He overhears a plot

So they abode still and made there their lodging. Then Sir Pellinore put off his armour; then a little afore midnight they heard the trotting of an horse. Be ye still, said King Pellinore, for we shall hear of some adventure.

CHAPTER XIV. How on the way he heard two knights, as he lay by night in a valley, and of their adventures. And therewith he armed him. So right even afore him there met two knights, the one came froward Camelot, and the other from the north, and either saluted other. What tidings at Camelot? said the one. By my head, said the other, there have I been and espied the court of King Arthur, and there is such a fellowship they may never be broken, and well-nigh all the world holdeth with Arthur, for there is the flower of chivalry. Now for this cause I am riding into the north, to tell our chieftains of the fellowship that is withholden with King Arthur. As for that, said the other knight, I have brought a remedy with me, that is the greatest poison that ever ye heard speak of, and to Camelot will I with it, for we have a friend right nigh King Arthur, and well cherished, that shall poison King Arthur; for so he hath promised our chieftains, and received great gifts for to do it. Beware, said the other knight, of Merlin, for he knoweth all things by the devil's craft. Therefore will I not let it, said the knight. And so they departed asunder. Anon after Pellinore made him ready, and his lady, and rode toward Camelot; and as they came by the well there as

the wounded knight was and the lady, there he found the knight, and the lady eaten with lions or wild beasts, all save the head, wherefore he made great sorrow, and wept passing sore, and said, Alas! her life might I have saved, but I was so fierce in my quest therefore I would not abide. Wherefore make ye such dole? said the lady. I wot not, said Pellinore, but my heart mourneth sore of the death of her, for she was a passing fair lady and a young. Now, will ye do by mine advice? said the lady, take this knight and let him be buried in an hermitage, and then take the lady's head and bear it with you unto Arthur. So King Pellinore took this dead knight on his shoulders, and brought him to the hermitage, and charged the hermit with the corpse, that service should be done for the soul; and take his harness for your pain. It shall be done, said the hermit, as I will answer unto God.

He arrives at Camelot

CHAPTER XV. How when he was come to Camelot he was sworn upon a book to tell the truth of his quest. And therewith they departed, and came there as the head of the lady lay with a fair yellow hair, that grieved King Pellinore passingly sore when he looked on it, for much he cast his heart on the visage. And so by noon they came to Camelot; and the king and the queen were passing fain of his coming to the court. And there he was made to swear upon the four Evangelists, to tell the truth of his quest from the one to the other. Ah! Sir Pellinore, said Queen Guenever, ye

He relates his adventures

were greatly to blame that ye saved not this lady's life. Madam, said Pellinore, ye were greatly to blame an ye would not save your own life an ye might, but, save your pleasure, I was so furious in my quest that I would not abide, and that repenteth me, and shall the days of my life. Truly, said Merlin, ye ought sore to repent it, for that lady was your own daughter begotten on the lady of the Rule, and that knight that was dead was her love, and should have wedded her, and he was a right good knight of a young man, and would have proved a good man, and to this court was he coming, and his name was Sir Miles of the Launds, and a knight came behind him and slew him with a spear, and his name is Loraine le Savage, a false knight and a coward; and she for great sorrow and dole slew herself with his sword, and her name was Eleine. And because ye would not abide and help her, ye shall see your best friend fail you when ye be in the greatest distress that ever ye were or shall be. And that penance God hath ordained you for that deed, that he that ye shall most trust to of any man alive, he shall leave you where ye shall be slain. Me forthinketh, said King Pellinore, that this shall me betide, but God may fordo well destiny. Thus, when the quest was done of the white hart, the which followed Sir Gawaine; and the quest of the brachet, followed of Sir Tor, Pellinore's son; and the quest of the lady that the knight took away, the which King Pellinore at that time followed; then the king stablished all his knights, and gave them that were of lands not

rich, he gave them lands, and charged them never to do outrageousity nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour, upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for no world's goods. Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost.

Arthur's charge to his knights

Explicit the Wedding of King Arthur

Sequitur quartus liber

BOOK IV

Merlin's doatage

CHAPTER I. How Merlin was assotted and doated on one of the ladies of the lake, and how he was shut in a rock under a stone and there died. So after these quests of Sir Gawaine, Sir Tor, and King Pellinore, it fell so that Merlin fell in a dotage on the damosel that King Pellinore brought to court, and she was one of the damosels of the lake, that hight Nimue. But Merlin would let have her no rest, but always he would be with her. And ever she made Merlin good cheer till she had learned of him all manner thing that she desired; and he was assotted upon her, that he might not be from her. So on a time he told King Arthur that he should not dure long, but for all his crafts he should be put in the earth quick, and so he told the king many things that should befall, but always he warned the king to keep well his sword and the scabbard, for he told him how the sword and the scabbard should be stolen by a woman from him that he most trusted. Also he told King Arthur that he should miss him,—Yet had ye liefer than all your lands to have me again. Ah, said the king, since ye know of your adventure, purvey for it, and put away by your crafts that misadventure. Nay, said Merlin, it will not be; so he departed from the king. And within a

He is shut in a rock

while the damosel of the lake departed, and Merlin went with her evermore wheresomever she went. And ofttimes Merlin would have had her privily away by his subtle crafts; then she made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her if he would have his will. And so he sware; so she and Merlin went over the sea unto the land of Benwick, whereas King Ban was king that had great war against King Claudas, and there Merlin spake with King Ban's wife, a fair lady and a good, and her name was Elaine, and there he saw young Launcelot. There the queen made great sorrow for the mortal war that King Claudas made on her lord and on her lands. Take none heaviness, said Merlin, for this same child within this twenty year shall revenge you on King Claudas, that all Christendom shall speak of it; and this same child shall be the most man of worship of the world, and his first name is Galahad, that know I well, said Merlin, and syne ye have confirmed him Launcelot. That is truth, said the queen, his first name was Galahad. O Merlin, said the queen, shall I live to see my son such a man of prowess? Yea, lady, on my peril ye shall see it, and live many winters after. And so soon after the lady and Merlin departed, and by the way Merlin showed her many wonders, and came into Cornwall. And always Merlin lay about the lady to have her maidenhood, and she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afeared of him because he was a devil's son, and she

Fivekings make war upon Arthur

could not beskift him by no mean. And so on a time it happed that Merlin showed to her in a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there, but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin.

CHAPTER II. How five kings came into this land to war against King Arthur, and what counsel Arthur had against them.

And as King Arthur rode to Camelot, and held there a great feast with mirth and joy, so soon after he returned unto Cardoile, and there came unto Arthur new tidings that the king of Denmark, and the king of Ireland that was his brother, and the king of the Vale, and the king of Soleise, and the king of the Isle of Longtains, all these five kings with a great host were entered into the land of King Arthur, and burnt and slew clean afore them, both cities and castles, that it was pity to hear. Alas, said Arthur, yet had I never rest one month syne I was crowned king of this land. Now shall I never rest till I meet with those kings in a fair field, that I make mine avow; for my true liege people shall not be destroyed in my default, go with me who will, and abide who that will. Then the king let write unto King Pellinore, and prayed him in all haste to make him ready with such people as he might lightliest

rear and hie him after in all haste. All the barons were privily wroth that the king would depart so suddenly; but the king by no mean would abide, but made writing unto them that were not there, and bade them hie after him, such as were not at that time in the court. Then the king came to Queen Guenever, and said, Lady, make you ready, for ye shall go with me, for I may not long miss you, ye shall cause me to be the more hardy, what adventure so befall me; I will not wit my lady to be in no jeopardy. Sir, said she, I am at your commandment, and shall be ready what time so ye be ready. So on the morn the king and the queen departed with such fellowship as they had, and came into the north, into a forest beside Humber, and there lodged them. When the word and tiding came unto the five kings above said, that Arthur was beside Humber in a forest, there was a knight, brother unto one of the five kings, that gave them this counsel: Ye know well that Sir Arthur hath the flower of chivalry of the world with him, as it is proved by the great battle he did with the eleven kings; and therefore hie unto him night and day till that we be nigh him, for the longer he tarrieth the bigger he is, and we ever the weaker; and he is so courageous of himself that he is come to the field with little people, and therefore let us set upon him or day and we shall slay down; of his knights there shall none escape.

The court go into the north

The five kings set upon Arthur by night

CHAPTER III. How King Arthur had ado with them and overthrew them, and slew the five kings and made the remnant to flee. Unto this counsel these five kings assented, and so they passed forth with their host through North Wales, and came upon Arthur by night, and set upon his host as the king and his knights were in their pavilions. King Arthur was unarmed, and had laid him to rest with his Queen Guenever. Sir, said Sir Kay, it is not good we be unarmed. We shall have no need, said Sir Gawaine and Sir Griflet that lay in a little pavilion by the king. With that they heard a great noise, and many cried, Treason, treason! Alas, said King Arthur, we be betrayed! Unto arms, fellows, then he cried. So they were armed anon at all points. Then came there a wounded knight unto the king, and said, Sir, save yourself and my lady the queen, for our host is destroyed, and much people of ours slain. So anon the king and the queen and the three knights took their horses, and rode toward Humber to pass over it, and the water was so rough that they were afraid to pass over. Now may ye choose, said King Arthur, whether ye will abide and take the adventure on this side, for an ye be taken they will slay you. It were me liefer, said the queen, to die in the water than to fall in your enemies' hands and there be slain. And as they stood so talking, Sir Kay saw the five kings coming on horseback by themselves alone, with their spears in their hands even toward them. Lo, said Sir Kay, yonder be the five

kings; let us go to them and match them. That were folly, said Sir Gawaine, for we are but three and they be five. That is truth, said Sir Griflet. No force, said Sir Kay, I will undertake for two of them, and then may ye three undertake for the other three. And therewithal, Sir Kay let his horse run as fast as he might, and struck one of them through the shield and the body a fathom, that the king fell to the earth stark dead. That saw Sir Gawaine, and ran unto another king so hard that he smote him through the body. And therewithal King Arthur ran to another, and smote him through the body with a spear, that he fell to the earth dead. Then Sir Griflet ran unto the fourth king, and gave him such a fall that his neck brake. Anon Sir Kay ran unto the fifth king, and smote him so hard on the helm that the stroke clave the helm and the head to the earth. That was well stricken, said King Arthur, and worshipfully hast thou holden thy promise, therefore I shall honour thee while that I live, and therewithal they set the queen in a barge into Humber; but always Queen Guenever praised Sir Kay for his deeds, and said, What lady that ye love, and she love you not again she were greatly to blame; and among ladies, said the queen, I shall bear your noble fame, for ye spake a great word, and fulfilled it worshipfully. And therewith the queen departed. Then the king and the three knights rode into the forest, for there they supposed to hear of them that were escaped; and there he found the most part of his people, and

Arthur overcomes them

The five kings slain

told them all how the five kings were dead. And therefore let us hold us together till it be day, and when their host have espied that their chieftains be slain, they will make such dole that they shall no more help themselves. And right so as the king said, so it was; for when they found the five kings dead, they made such dole that they fell from their horses. Therewithal came King Arthur but with a few people, and slew on the left hand and on the right hand, that well-nigh there escaped no man, but all were slain to the number thirty thousand. And when the battle was all ended, the king kneeled down and thanked God meekly. And then he sent for the queen, and soon she was come, and she made great joy of the overcoming of that battle.

CHAPTER IV. How the battle was finished or he came, and how King Arthur founded an abbey where the battle was. Therewithal came one to King Arthur, and told him that King Pellinore was within three mile with a great host; and he said, Go unto him, and let him understand how we have sped. So within a while King Pellinore came with a great host, and saluted the people and the king, and there was great joy made on every side. Then the king let search how much people of his party there was slain; and there were found but little past two hundred men slain and eight knights of the Table Round in their pavilions. Then the king let rear and devise in the same place whereat the battle

was done a fair abbey, and endowed it with great livelihood, and let it call the Abbey of La Beale Adventure. But when some of them came into their countries, whereof the five kings were kings, and told them how they were slain, there was made great dole. And when all King Arthur's enemies, as the King of North Wales, and the kings of the North, wist of the battle, they were passing heavy. And so the king returned unto Camelot in haste. And when he was come to Camelot he called King Pellinore unto him, and said, Ye understand well that we have lost eight knights of the best of the Table Round, and by your advice we will choose eight again of the best we may find in this court. Sir, said Pellinore, I shall counsel you after my conceit the best: there are in your court full noble knights both of old and young; and therefore by mine advice ye shall choose half of the old and half of the young. Which be the old? said King Arthur. Sir, said King Pellinore, meseemeth that King Uriens that hath wedded your sister Morgan le Fay, and the King of the Lake, and Sir Hervise de Revel, a noble knight, and Sir Galagars, the fourth. This is well devised, said King Arthur, and right so shall it be. Now, which are the four young knights? said Arthur. Sir, said Pellinore, the first is Sir Gawaine, your nephew, that is as good a knight of his time as any is in this land; and the second as meseemeth best is Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu, that is a good knight and full desirous in arms, and

Arthur founds an abbey

New knights of the Round Table created

who may see him live he shall prove a good knight; and the third as meseemeth is well to be one of the knights of the Round Table, Sir Kay the Seneschal, for many times he hath done full worshipfully, and now at your last battle he did full honourably for to undertake to slay two kings. By my head, said Arthur, he is best worth to be a knight of the Round Table of any that ye have rehearsed, an he had done no more prowess in his life days.

CHAPTER V. How Sir Tor was made knight of the Round Table, and how Bagdemagus was displeased. Now, said King Pellinore, I shall put to you two knights, and ye shall choose which is most worthy, that is Sir Bagdemagus, and Sir Tor, my son. But because Sir Tor is my son I may not praise him, but else, an he were not my son, I durst say that of his age there is not in this land a better knight than he is, nor of better conditions and loath to do any wrong, and loath to take any wrong. By my head, said Arthur, he is a passing good knight as any ye spake of this day, that wot I well, said the king; for I have seen him proved, but he sayeth little and he doth much more, for I know none in all this court an he were as well born on his mother's side as he is on your side, that is like him of prowess and of might: and therefore I will have him at this time, and leave Sir Bagdemagus till another time. So when they were so chosen by the assent of all the

barons, so were there found in their sieges every knights' names that here are rehearsed; and so were they set in their sieges, whereof Sir Bagdemagus was wonderly wroth, that Sir Tor was advanced afore him, and therefore suddenly he departed from the court, and took his squire with him, and rode long in a forest till they came to a cross, and there alit and said his prayers devoutly. The meanwhile his squire found written upon the cross, that Bagdemagus should never return unto the court again, till he had won a knight's body of the Round Table, body for body. So, sir, said the squire, here I find writing of you, therefore I rede you return again to the court. That shall I never, said Bagdemagus, till men speak of me great worship, and that I be worthy to be a knight of the Round Table. And so he rode forth, and there by the way he found a branch of an holy herb that was the sign of the Sangreal, and no knight found such tokens but he were a good liver. So, as Sir Bagdemagus rode to see many adventures, it happed him to come to the rock whereas the Lady of the Lake had put Merlin under the stone, and there he heard him make great dole; whereof Sir Bagdemagus would have holpen him, and went unto the great stone, and it was so heavy that an hundred men might not lift it up. When Merlin wist he was there, he bade leave his labour, for all was in vain, for he might never be holpen but by her that put him there. And so Bagdemagus departed and did many adventures, and proved after a full good knight, and came again to the court and

Sir Tor made knight of the Round Table

Sir Bagdemagus displeased

was made knight of the Round Table. So on the morn there fell new tidings and other adventures.

CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur, King Uriens, and Sir Accolon of Gaul, chased an hart, and of their marvellous adventures.

Then it befell that Arthur and many of his knights rode a-hunting into a great forest, and it happed King Arthur, King Uriens, and Sir Accolon of Gaul, followed a great hart, for they three were well horsed, and so they chased so fast that within a while they three were then ten mile from their fellowship. And at the last they chased so sore that they slew their horses underneath them. Then were they all three on foot, and ever they saw the hart afore them passing weary and embushed. What will we do? said King Arthur, we are hard bestead. Let us go on foot, said King Uriens, till we may meet with some lodging. Then were they ware of the hart that lay on a great water bank, and a brachet biting on his throat, and more other hounds came after. Then King Arthur blew the prise and dight the hart. Then the king looked about the world, and saw afore him in a great water a little ship, all apparelled with silk down to the water, and the ship came right unto them and landed on the sands. Then Arthur went to the bank and looked in, and saw none earthly creature therein. Sirs, said the king, come thence, and let us see what is in this ship. So they went in all three, and found it richly behanged with cloth of silk. By then it was

dark night, and there suddenly were about them an hundred torches set upon all the sides of the ship boards, and it gave great light; and therewithal there came out twelve fair damosels and saluted King Arthur on their knees, and called him by his name, and said he was right welcome, and such cheer as they had he should have of the best. The king thanked them fair. Therewithal they led the king and his two fellows into a fair chamber, and there was a cloth laid richly beseen of all that longed unto a table, and there were they served of all wines and meats that they could think; of that the king had great marvel, for he fared never better in his life as for one supper. And so when they had supped at their leisure, King Arthur was led into a chamber, a richer beseen chamber saw he never none, and so was King Uriens served, and led into such another chamber, and Sir Accolon was led into the third chamber passing richly and well beseen; and so they were laid in their beds easily. And anon they fell a-sleep, and slept marvellously sore all the night. And on the morrow King Uriens was in Camelot abed in his wife's arms, Morgan le Fay. And when he awoke he had great marvel, how he came there, for on the even afore he was two days' journey from Camelot. And when King Arthur awoke he found himself in a dark prison, hearing about him many complaints of woful knights.

Arthur hunts a hart

He finds himself in prison

CHAPTER VII. How Arthur took upon him to fight to be delivered out of prison, and also for to deliver twenty knights that were in prison. What are ye that so complain? said King Arthur. We be here twenty knights, prisoners, said they, and some of us have lain here seven year, and some more and some less. For what cause? said Arthur. We shall tell you, said the knights; this lord of this castle, his name is Sir Damas, and he is the falsest knight that liveth, and full of treason, and a very coward as any liveth, and he hath a younger brother, a good knight of prowess, his name is Sir Ontzlake, and this traitor Damas, the elder brother will give him no part of his livelihood, but as Sir Ontzlake keepeth thorough prowess of his hands, and so he keepeth from him a full fair manor and a rich, and therein Sir Ontzlake dwelleth worshipfully, and is well beloved of all people. And this Sir Damas, our master is as evil beloved, for he is without mercy, and he is a coward, and great war hath been betwixt them both, but Ontzlake hath ever the better, and ever he proffereth Sir Damas to fight for the livelihood, body for body, but he will not do; other-else to find a knight to fight for him. Unto that Sir Damas had granted to find a knight, but he is so evil beloved and hated, that there is never a knight will fight for him. And when Damas saw this, that there was never a knight would fight for him, he hath daily lain await with many knights with him, and taken all the knights in this country to see and espy their adventures, he hath taken them by force and

brought them to his prison. And so he took us separately as we rode on our adventures, and many good knights have died in this prison for hunger, to the number of eighteen knights; and if any of us all that here is, or hath been, would have foughten with his brother Ontzlake, he would have delivered us, but for because this Damas is so false and so full of treason we would never fight for him to die for it. And we be so lean for hunger that unnethe we may stand on our feet. God deliver you, for his mercy, said Arthur. Anon, therewithal there came a damosel unto Arthur, and asked him, What cheer? I cannot say, said he. Sir, said she, an ye will fight for my lord, ye shall be delivered out of prison, and else ye escape never the life. Now, said Arthur, that is hard, yet had I liefer to fight with a knight than to die in prison; with this, said Arthur, I may be delivered and all these prisoners, I will do the battle. Yes, said the damosel. I am ready, said Arthur, an I had horse and armour. Ye shall lack none, said the damosel. Meseemeth, damosel, I should have seen you in the court of Arthur. Nay, said the damosel, I came never there, I am the lord's daughter of this castle. Yet was she false, for she was one of the damosels of Morgan le Fay. Anon she went unto Sir Damas, and told him how he would do battle for him, and so he sent for Arthur. And when he came he was well coloured, and well made of his limbs, that all knights that saw him said it were pity that such a knight should die in prison. So Sir Damas and he were agreed that he should fight

His adventures

He delivers twenty knights

for him upon this covenant, that all other knights should be delivered; and unto that was Sir Damas sworn unto Arthur, and also to do the battle to the uttermost. And with that all the twenty knights were brought out of the dark prison into the hall, and delivered, and so they all abode to see the battle.

CHAPTER VIII. How Accolon found himself by a well, and he took upon him to do battle against Arthur. Now turn we unto Accolon of Gaul, that when he awoke he found himself by a deep well-side, within half a foot, in great peril of death. And there came out of that fountain a pipe of silver, and out of that pipe ran water all on high in a stone of marble. When Sir Accolon saw this, he blessed him and said, Jesus save my lord King Arthur, and King Uriens, for these damosels in this ship have betrayed us, they were devils and no women; and if I may escape this misadventure, I shall destroy all where I may find these false damosels that use enchantments. Right with that there came a dwarf with a great mouth and a flat nose, and saluted Sir Accolon, and said how he came from Queen Morgan le Fay, and she greeteth you well, and biddeth you be of strong heart, for ye shall fight to-morrow with a knight at the hour of prime, and therefore she hath sent you here Excalibur Arthur's sword, and the scabbard, and she biddeth you as ye love her, that ye do the battle to the uttermost, without any mercy, like as ye had

Morgan le Fay sends Accolon Excalibur

promised her when ye spake together in private; and what damosel that bringeth her the knight's head, which ye shall fight withal, she will make her a queen. Now I understand you well, said Accolon, I shall hold that I have promised her now I have the sword: when saw ye my lady Queen Morgan le Fay? Right late, said the dwarf. Then Accolon took him in his arms and said, Recommend me unto my lady queen, and tell her all shall be done that I have promised her, and else I will die for it. Now I suppose, said Accolon, she hath made all these crafts and enchantments for this battle. Ye may well believe it, said the dwarf. Right so there came a knight and a lady with six squires, and saluted Accolon, and prayed him for to arise, and come and rest him at his manor. And so Accolon mounted upon a void horse, and went with the knight unto a fair manor by a priory, and there he had passing good cheer. Then Sir Damas sent unto his brother Sir Ontzlake, and bade make him ready by to-morn at the hour of prime, and to be in the field to fight with a good knight, for he had found a good knight that was ready to do battle at all points. When this word came unto Sir Ontzlake he was passing heavy, for he was wounded a little tofore through both his thighs with a spear, and made great dole; but as he was wounded he would have taken the battle on hand. So it happed at that time, by the means of Morgan le Fay, Accolon was with Sir Ontzlake lodged; and when he heard of that battle, and how Ontzlake was wounded, he said that

and sends Arthur a counterfeit

he would fight for him, because Morgan le Fay had sent him Excalibur and the sheath for to fight with the knight on the morn: this was the cause Sir Accolon took the battle on hand. Then Sir Ontzlake was passing glad, and thanked Sir Accolon with all his heart that he would do so much for him. And therewithal Sir Ontzlake sent word unto his brother Sir Damas, that he had a knight that for him should be ready in the field by the hour of prime. So on the morn Sir Arthur was armed and well horsed, and asked Sir Damas, When shall we to the field? Sir, said Sir Damas, ye shall hear mass. And so Arthur heard a mass, and when mass was done there came a squire on a great horse, and asked Sir Damas if his knight were ready, for our knight is ready in the field. Then Sir Arthur mounted upon horseback, and there were all the knights and commons of that country; and so by all advices there were chosen twelve good men of the country for to wait upon the two knights. And right as Arthur was on horseback there came a damosel from Morgan le Fay, and brought unto Sir Arthur a sword like unto Excalibur, and the scabbard, and said unto Arthur, Morgan le Fay sendeth here your sword for great love. And he thanked her, and weened it had been so, but she was false, for the sword and the scabbard were counterfeit, and brittle, and false.

CHAPTER IX. Of the battle between King Arthur and Accolon. And then they dressed them on both parties of the field, and let their horses run so fast that either smote other in the midst of the shield with their spear-heads, that both horse and man went to the earth; and then they started up both, and pulled out their swords. The meanwhile that they were thus at the battle, came the damosel of the lake into the field, that put Merlin under the stone; and she came thither for love of King Arthur, for she knew how Morgan le Fay had so ordained that King Arthur should have been slain that day, and therefore she came to save his life. And so they went eagerly to the battle, and gave many great strokes, but always Arthur's sword bit not like Accolon's sword; but for the most part, every stroke that Accolon gave he wounded sore Arthur, that it was marvellous he stood, and always his blood fell from him fast. When Arthur beheld the ground so sore be-bled he was dismayed, and then he deemed treason that his sword was changed; for his sword bit not steel as it was wont to do, therefore he dread him sore to be dead, for ever him seemed that the sword in Accolon's hand was Excalibur, for at every stroke that Accolon struck he drew blood on Arthur. Now, knight, said Accolon unto Arthur, keep thee well from me; but Arthur answered not again, and gave him such a buffet on the helm that it made him to stoop, nigh falling down to the earth. Then Sir Accolon withdrew him a little, and came on with Excalibur on high, and

Accolon fighteth against Arthur

and send's Arthur's coun

smote Sir Arthur such a buffet that he fell nigh to the earth. Then were they wroth both, and gave each other many sore strokes, but always Sir Arthur lost so much blood that it was marvel he stood on his feet, but he was so full of knighthood that knightly he endured the pain. And Sir Accolon lost not a dele of blood, therefore he waxed passing light, and Sir Arthur was passing feeble, and weened verily to have died; but for all that he made countenance as though he might endure, and held Accolon as short as he might. But Accolon was so bold because of Excalibur that he waxed passing hardy. But all men that beheld him said they saw never knight fight so well as Arthur did considering the blood that he bled. So was all the people sorry for him, but the two brethren would not accord; then always they fought together as fierce knights, and Sir Arthur withdrew him a little for to rest him, and Sir Accolon called him to battle and said, It is no time for me to suffer thee to rest. And there with he came fiercely upon Arthur, and Sir Arthur was wroth for the blood that he had lost, and smote Accolon on high upon the helm, so mightily, that he made him nigh to fall to the earth; and therewith Arthur's sword brast at the cross, and fell in the grass among the blood, and the pommel and the sure handles he held in his hands. When Sir Arthur saw that, he was in great fear to die, but always he held up his shield and lost no ground, nor bated no cheer.

CHAPTER X. How King Arthur's sword that he fought with brake, and how he recovered of Accolon his own sword Excalibur, and overcame his enemy. Then Sir Accolon began with words of treason, and said, Knight, thou art overcome, and mayst not endure, and also thou art weaponless, and thou hast lost much of thy blood, and I am full loath to slay thee, therefore yield thee to me as recreant. Nay, said Sir Arthur, I may not so, for I have promised to do the battle to the uttermost, by the faith of my body, while me lasteth the life, and therefore I had liefer to die with honour than to live with shame; and if it were possible for me to die an hundred times, I had liefer to die so oft than yield me to thee; for though I lack weapon, I shall lack no worship, and if thou slay me weaponless that shall be thy shame. Well, said Accolon, as for the shame I will not spare, now keep thee from me, for thou art but a dead man. And therewith Accolon gave him such a stroke that he fell nigh to the earth, and would have had Arthur to have cried him mercy. But Sir Arthur pressed unto Accolon with his shield, and gave him with the pommel in his hand such a buffet that he went three strides aback. When the damosel of the lake beheld Arthur, how full of prowess his body was, and the false treason that was wrought for him to have had him slain; she had great pity that so good a knight and such a man of worship should so be destroyed. And at the next stroke Sir Accolon struck him such a stroke that by the damosel's

Accolon commands Arthur to yield

and Arthur overcalibur

enchantment the sword Excalibur fell out of Accolon's hand to the earth. And therewithal Sir Arthur lightly leapt to it, and gat it in his hand, and forthwithal he knew that it was his sword Excalibur, and said, Thou hast been from me all too long, and much damage hast thou done me; and therewith he espied the scabbard hanging by his side, and suddenly he sterte to him and pulled the scabbard from him, and threw it from him as far as he might throw it. O knight, said Arthur, this day hast thou done me great damage with this sword; now are ye come unto your death, for I shall not warrant you but ye shall as well be rewarded with this sword or ever we depart as thou hast rewarded me, for much pain have ye made me to endure, and much blood have I lost. And therewith Sir Arthur rushed on him with all his might and pulled him to the earth, and then rushed off his helm, and gave him such a buffet on the head that the blood came out at his ears, his nose, and his mouth. Now will I slay thee, said Arthur. Slay me ye may well, said Accolon, an it please you, for ye are the best knight that ever I found, and I see well that God is with you. But for I promised to do this battle, said Accolon, to the uttermost, and never to be recreant while I lived, therefore shall I never yield me with my mouth, but God do with my body what he will. Then Sir Arthur remembered him, and thought he should have seen this knight. Now tell me, said Arthur, or I will slay thee, of what country art thou, and of what court? Sir Knight, said

Sir Accolon, I am of the court of King Arthur, and my name is Accolon of Gaul. Then was Arthur more dismayed than he was beforehand; for then he remembered him of his sister Morgan le Fay, and of the enchantment of the ship. O sir knight, said he, I pray you tell me who gave you this sword, and by whom ye had it.

and cr comes Accolo.

CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him. Then Sir Accolon bethought him, and said, Woe worth this sword, for by it have I got my death. It may well be, said the king. Now, sir, said Accolon, I will tell you; this sword hath been in my keeping the most part of this twelvemonth; and Morgan le Fay, King Uriens' wife, sent it me yesterday by a dwarf, to this intent, that I should slay King Arthur, her brother. For ye shall understand King Arthur is the man in the world that she most hateth, because he is most of worship and of prowess of any of her blood; also she loveth me out of measure as paramour, and I her again; and if she might bring about to slay Arthur by her crafts, she would slay her husband King Uriens lightly, and then had she me devised to be king in this land, and so to reign, and she to be my queen; but that is now done, said Accolon, for I am sure of my death. Well, said Sir Arthur, I feel by you ye would have been king in this land. It had been great damage to have destroyed your lord,

and Accolon confesses the plot

said Arthur. It is truth, said Accolon, but now I have told you truth, wherefore I pray you tell me of whence ye are, and of what court? O Accolon, said King Arthur, now I let thee wit that I am King Arthur, to whom thou hast done great damage. When Accolon heard that he cried aloud, Fair, sweet lord, have mercy on me, for I knew not you. O Sir Accolon, said King Arthur, mercy shalt thou have, because I feel by thy words at this time thou knewest not my person; but I understand well by thy words that thou hast agreed to the death of my person, and therefore thou art a traitor; but I wite thee the less, for my sister Morgan le Fay by her false crafts made thee to agree and consent to her false lusts, but I shall be sore avenged upon her an I live, that all Christendom shall speak of it; God knoweth I have honoured her and worshipped her more than all my kin, and more have I trusted her than mine own wife and all my kin after. Then Sir Arthur called the keepers of the field, and said, Sirs, come hither, for here are we two knights that have fought unto a great damage unto us both, and like each one of us to have slain other, if it had happed so; and had any of us known other, here had been no battle, nor stroke stricken. Then all aloud cried Accolon unto all the knights and men that were then there gathered together, and said to them in this manner, O lords, this noble knight that I have fought withal, the which me sore repenteth, is the most man of prowess, of manhood, and of worship in the world, for it is

himself King Arthur, our alther liege lord, and with mishap and with misadventure have I done this battle with the king and lord that I am holden withal.

Arthur makes himself known

CHAPTER XII. How Arthur accorded the two brethren, and delivered the twenty knights, and how Sir Accolon died. Then all the people fell down on their knees and cried King Arthur mercy. Mercy shall ye have, said Arthur: here may ye see what adventures befall ofttime of errant knights, how that I have fought with a knight of mine own unto my great damage and his both. But, sirs, because I am sore hurt, and he both, and I had great need of a little rest, ye shall understand the opinion betwixt you two brethren: As to thee, Sir Damas, for whom I have been champion and won the field of this knight, yet will I judge because ye, Sir Damas, are called an orgulous knight, and full of villainy, and not worth of prowess your deeds, therefore I will that ye give unto your brother all the whole manor with the appurtenance, under this form, that Sir Ontzlake hold the manor of you, and yearly to give you a palfrey to ride upon, for that will become you better to ride on than upon a courser. Also I charge thee, Sir Damas, upon pain of death, that thou never distress no knights errant that ride on their adventure. And also that thou restore these twenty knights that thou hast long kept prisoners, of all their harness, that they be content for; and if any of them come to my court and complain of thee, by my head

He makes peace between the brothers

thou shalt die therefore. Also, Sir Ontzlake, as to you, because ye are named a good knight, and full of prowess, and true and gentle in all your deeds, this shall be your charge. I will give you that in all goodly haste ye come unto me and my court, and ye shall be a knight of mine, and if your deeds be thereafter I shall so prefer you, by the grace of God, that ye shall in short time be in ease for to live as worshipfully as your brother Sir Damas. God thank your largeness of your goodness and of your bounty, I shall be from henceforward at all times at your commandment; for, sir, said Sir Ontzlake, as God would, as I was hurt but late with an adventurous knight through both my thighs, that grieved me sore, and else had I done this battle with you. God would, said Arthur, it had been so, for then had not I been hurt as I am. I shall tell you the cause why: for I had not been hurt as I am, had it not been mine own sword, that was stolen from me by treason; and this battle was ordained aforehand to have slain me, and so it was brought to the purpose by false treason, and by false enchantment. Alas, said Sir Ontzlake, that is great pity that ever so noble a man as ye are of your deeds and prowess, that any man or woman might find in their hearts to work any treason against you. I shall reward them, said Arthur, in short time, by the grace of God. Now, tell me, said Arthur, how far am I from Camelot? Sir, ye are two days' journey therefrom. I would fain be at some place of worship, said Sir Arthur, that I might

rest me. Sir, said Sir Ontzlake, hereby is a rich abbey of your elders' foundation, of nuns, but three miles hence. So the king took his leave of all the people, and mounted upon horseback, and Sir Accolon with him. And when they were come to the abbey, he let fetch leeches and search his wounds and Accolon's both; but Sir Accolon died within four days, for he had bled so much blood that he might not live, but King Arthur was well recovered. So when Accolon was dead he let send him on an horse-bier with six knights unto Camelot, and said: Bear him to my sister Morgan le Fay, and say that I send her him to a present, and tell her I have my sword Excalibur and the scabbard; so they departed with the body.

Accolon dies

CHAPTER XIII. How Morgan would have slain Sir Uriens her husband, and how Sir Uwaine her son saved him. The meanwhile Morgan le Fay had weened King Arthur had been dead. So on a day she espied King Uriens lay in his bed sleeping. Then she called unto her a maiden of her counsel, and said, Go fetch me my lord's sword, for I saw never better time to slay him than now. O madam, said the damosel, an ye slay my lord ye can never escape. Care not you, said Morgan le Fay, for now I see my time in the which it is best to do it, and therefore hie thee fast and fetch me the sword. Then the damosel departed, and found Sir Uwaine sleeping upon a bed in another chamber, so she went unto Sir Uwaine, and awaked him, and bade

Morgan le Fay attempts to slay Uriens

him, Arise, and wait on my lady your mother, for she will slay the king your father sleeping in his bed, for I go to fetch his sword. Well, said Sir Uwaine, go on your way, and let me deal. Anon the damosel brought Morgan the sword with quaking hands, and she lightly took the sword, and pulled it out, and went boldly unto the bed's side, and awaited how and where she might slay him best. And as she lifted up the sword to smite, Sir Uwaine leapt unto his mother, and caught her by the hand, and said, Ah, fiend, what wilt thou do? An thou wert not my mother, with this sword I should smite off thy head. Ah, said Sir Uwaine, men saith that Merlin was begotten of a devil, but I may say an earthly devil bare me. O fair son, Uwaine, have mercy upon me, I was tempted with a devil, wherefore I cry thee mercy; I will never more do so; and save my worship and discover me not. On this covenant, said Sir Uwaine, I will forgive it you, so ye will never be about to do such deeds. Nay, son, said she, and that I make you assurance.

CHAPTER XIV. How Queen Morgan le Fay made great sorrow for the death of Accolon, and how she stole away the scabbard from Arthur. Then came tidings unto Morgan le Fay that Accolon was dead, and his body brought unto the church, and how King Arthur had his sword again. But when Queen Morgan wist that Accolon was dead, she was so sorrowful that near her

heart to-brast. But because she would not it were known, outward she kept her countenance, and made no semblance of sorrow. But well she wist an she abode till her brother Arthur came thither, there should no gold go for her life. Then she went unto Queen Guenever, and asked her leave to ride into the country. Ye may abide, said Queen Guenever, till your brother the king come home. I may not, said Morgan le Fay, for I have such hasty tidings, that I may not tarry. Well, said Guenever, ye may depart when ye will. So early on the morn, or it was day, she took her horse and rode all that day and most part of the night, and on the morn by noon she came to the same abbey of nuns whereat lay King Arthur; and she knowing he was there, she asked where he was. And they answered how he had laid him in his bed to sleep, for he had had but little rest these three nights. Well, said she, I charge you that none of you awake him till I do, and then she alit off her horse, and thought for to steal away Excalibur his sword, and so she went straight unto his chamber, and no man durst disobey her commandment, and there she found Arthur asleep in his bed, and Excalibur in his right hand naked. When she saw that she was passing heavy that she might not come by the sword without she had awaked him, and then she wist well she had been dead. Then she took the scabbard and went her way on horseback. When the king awoke and missed his scabbard, he was wroth, and he asked who had been there, and they said his sister, Queen

She steals Arthur's scabbard

and rides away with it

Morgan had been there, and had put the scabbard under her mantle and was gone. Alas, said Arthur, falsely ye have watched me. Sir, said they all, we durst not disobey your sister's commandment. Ah, said the king, let fetch the best horse may be found, and bid Sir Ontzlake arm him in all haste, and take another good horse and ride with me. So anon the king and Ontzlake were well armed, and rode after this lady, and so they came by a cross and found a cowherd, and they asked the poor man if there came any lady late riding that way. Sir, said this poor man, right late came a lady riding with a forty horses, and to yonder forest she rode. Then they spurred their horses, and followed fast, and within a while Arthur had a sight of Morgan le Fay, then he chased as fast as he might. When she espied him following her, she rode a greater pace through the forest till she came to a plain, and when she saw she might not escape, she rode unto a lake thereby, and said, Whatsoever come of me, my brother shall not have this scabbard. And then she let throw the scabbard in the deepest of the water so it sank, for it was heavy of gold and precious stones. Then she rode into a valley where many great stones were, and when she saw she must be overtaken, she shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment unto a great marble stone. Anon withal came Sir Arthur and Sir Ontzlake whereas the king might know his sister and her men, and one knight from another. Ah, said the king, here may ye see the vengeance of God, and now am

I sorry that this misadventure is befallen. And then he looked for the scabbard, but it would not be found, so he returned to the abbey where he came from. So when Arthur was gone she turned all into the likeliness as she and they were before, and said, Sirs, now may we go where we will.

Arthur pursues her

CHAPTER XV. How Morgan le Fay saved a knight that should have been drowned, and how King Arthur returned home again.

Then said Morgan, Saw ye Arthur, my brother? Yea, said her knights, right well, and that ye should have found an we might have stered from one stede, for by his armyvestal countenance he would have caused us to have fled. I believe you, said Morgan. Anon after as she rode she met a knight leading another knight on his horse before him, bound hand and foot, blindfold, to have drowned him in a fountain. When she saw this knight so bound, she asked him, What will ye do with that knight? Lady, said he, I will drown him. For what cause? she asked. For I found him with my wife, and she shall have the same death anon. That were pity, said Morgan le Fay! Now, what say ye, knight, is it truth that he saith of you? she said to the knight that should be drowned. Nay truly, madam, he saith not right on me. Of whence be ye, said Morgan le Fay, and of what country? I am of the court of King Arthur, and my name is Manassen, cousin unto Accolon of Gaul. Ye say well, said she, and for the

Arthur returns to Camelot

love of him ye shall be delivered, and ye shall have your adversary in the same case ye be in. So Manassen was loosed and the other knight bound. And anon Manassen unarmed him, and armed himself in his harness, and so mounted on horseback, and the knight afore him, and so threw him into the fountain and drowned him. And then he rode unto Morgan again, and asked if she would anything unto King Arthur. Tell him that I rescued thee, not for the love of him but for the love of Accolon, and tell him I fear him not while I can make me and them that be with me in likeness of stones; and let him wit I can do much more when I see my time. And so she departed into the country of Gore, and there was she richly received, and made her castles and towns passing strong, for always she dread much King Arthur. When the king had well rested him at the abbey, he rode unto Camelot, and found his queen and his barons right glad of his coming. And when they heard of his strange adventures as is afore rehearsed, then all had marvel of the falsehood of Morgan le Fay; many knights wished her burnt. Then came Manassen to court and told the king of his adventure. Well, said the king, she is a kind sister; I shall so be avenged on her an I live, that all Christendom shall speak of it. So on the morn there came a damosel from Morgan to the king, and she brought with her the richest mantle that ever was seen in that court, for it was set as full of precious stones as one might stand by another, and there

were the richest stones that ever the king saw. And the damosel said, Your sister sendeth you this mantle, and desireth that ye should take this gift of her; and in what thing she hath offended you, she will amend it at your own pleasure. When the king beheld this mantle it pleased him much, but he said but little.

Morgan sends Arthur a rich mantle

CHAPTER XVI. How the damosel of the lake saved King Arthur from a mantle that should have burnt him. With that came the damosel of the lake unto the king, and said, Sir, I must speak with you in privitè. Say on, said the king, what ye will. Sir, said the damosel, put not on you this mantle till ye have seen more, and in no wise let it not come on you nor on no knight of yours till ye command the bringer thereof to put it upon her. Well, said King Arthur, it shall be done as ye counsel me. And then he said unto the damosel that came from his sister, Damosel, this mantle that ye have brought me, I will see it upon you. Sir, she said, It will not beseem me to wear a king's garment. By my head, said Arthur, ye shall wear it or it come on my back, or any man's that here is. And so the king made it to be put upon her, and forthwithal she fell down dead, and never more spake word after and burnt to coals. Then was the king wonderly wroth, more than he was toforehand, and said unto King Uriens, My sister, your wife, is alway about to betray me, and well I wot either ye, or my nephew, your son, is of counsel with her to have me destroyed; but

Uwaine and Gawaine leave the court

as for you, said the king to King Uriens, I deem not greatly that ye be of her counsel, for Accolon confessed to me by his own mouth, that she would have destroyed you as well as me, therefore I hold you excused; but as for your son, Sir Uwaine, I hold him suspect, therefore I charge you put him out of my court. So Sir Uwaine was discharged. And when Sir Gawaine wist that, he made him ready to go with him; and said, Whoso banisheth my cousin-germain shall banish me. So they two departed, and rode into a great forest, and so they came to an abbey of monks, and there were well lodged. But when the king wist that Sir Gawaine was departed from the court, there was made great sorrow among all the estates. Now, said Gaheris, Gawaine's brother, we have lost two good knights for the love of one. So on the morn they heard their masses in the abbey, and so they rode forth till that they came to a great forest. Then was Sir Gawaine ware in a valley by a turret, twelve fair damosels, and two knights armed on great horses, and the damosels went to and fro by a tree. And then was Sir Gawaine ware how there hung a white shield on that tree, and ever as the damosels came by it they spit upon it, and some threw mire upon the shield.

CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine met with twelve fair damosels, and how they complained on Sir Marhaus.

Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine went and saluted them, and asked why they did that

despite to the shield. Sirs, said the damosels, we shall tell you. There is a knight in this country that owneth this white shield, and he is a passing good man of his hands, but he hateth all ladies and gentlewomen, and therefore we do all this despite to the shield. I shall say you, said Sir Gawaine, it beseemeth evil a good knight to despise all ladies and gentlewomen, and peradventure though he hate you he hath some certain cause, and peradventure he loveth in some other places ladies and gentlewomen, and to be loved again, an he be such a man of prowess as ye speak of. Now, what is his name? Sir, said they, his name is Marhaus, the king's son of Ireland. I know him well, said Sir Uwaine, he is a passing good knight as any is a-live, for I saw him once proved at a jousts where many knights were gathered, and that time there might no man withstand him. Ah! said Sir Gawaine, damosels, methinketh ye are to blame, for it is to suppose, he that hung that shield there, he will not be long therefrom, and then may those knights match him on horseback, and that is more your worship than thus; for I will abide no longer to see a knight's shield dishonoured. And therewith Sir Uwaine and Gawaine departed a little from them, and then were they ware where Sir Marhaus came riding on a great horse straight toward them. And when the twelve damosels saw Sir Marhaus they fled into the turret as they were wild, so that some of them fell by the way. Then the one of the knights of the tower dressed his shield, and said on high, Sir Marhaus,

The damosels and the white shield

Sir Marhaus jousts with Gawaine and Uwaine

defend thee. And so they ran together that the knight brake his spear on Marhaus, and Marhaus smote him so hard that he brake his neck and the horse's back. That saw the other knight of the turret, and dressed him toward Marhaus, and they met so eagerly together that the knight of the turret was soon smitten down, horse and man, stark dead.

CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Marhaus jousted with Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine, and overthrew them both. And then Sir Marhaus rode unto his shield, and saw how it was defouled, and said, Of this despite I am a part avenged, but for her love that gave me this white shield I shall wear thee, and hang mine where thou wast; and so he hanged it about his neck. Then he rode straight unto Sir Gawaine and to Sir Uwaine, and asked them what they did there? They answered him that they came from King Arthur's court to see adventures. Well, said Sir Marhaus, here am I ready, an adventurous knight that will fulfil any adventure that ye will desire; and so departed from them, to fetch his range. Let him go, said Sir Uwaine unto Sir Gawaine, for he is a passing good knight as any is living; I would not by my will that any of us were matched with him. Nay, said Sir Gawaine, not so, it were shame to us were he not assayed, were he never so good a knight. Well, said Sir Uwaine, I will assay him afore you, for I am more weaker than ye, and if he smite me down then may ye revenge me. So these two knights came together with

and overcomes them both

great raundon, that Sir Uwaine smote Sir Marhaus that his spear brast in pieces on the shield, and Sir Marhaus smote him so sore that horse and man he bare to the earth, and hurt Sir Uwaine on the left side. Then Sir Marhaus turned his horse and rode toward Gawaine with his spear, and when Sir Gawaine saw that he dressed his shield, and they aventred their spears, and they came together with all the might of their horses, that either knight smote other so hard in middes of their shields, but Sir Gawaine's spear brake, but Sir Marhaus's spear held; and therewith Sir Gawaine and his horse rushed down to the earth. And lightly Sir Gawaine rose on his feet, and pulled out his sword, and dressed him toward Sir Marhaus on foot, and Sir Marhaus saw that, and pulled out his sword and began to come to Sir Gawaine on horseback. Sir knight, said Sir Gawaine, alight on foot, or else I will slay thy horse. Gramercy, said Sir Marhaus, of your gentleness ye teach me courtesy, for it is not for one knight to be on foot, and the other on horseback. And therewith Sir Marhaus set his spear against a tree and alit and tied his horse to a tree, and dressed his shield, and either came unto other eagerly, and smote together with their swords that their shields flew in cantels, and they bruised their helms and their hauberks, and wounded either other. But Sir Gawaine from it passed nine of the clock waxed ever stronger and stronger, for then it came to the hour of noon, and thrice his might was increased. All this espied Sir Marhaus and had great wonder how his might in-

Gawaine and Marhaus swear friendship

creased, and so they wounded other passing sore. And then when it was past noon, and when it drew toward evensong, Sir Gawaine's strength feebled, and waxed passing faint that unnethes he might dure any longer, and Sir Marhaus was then bigger and bigger. Sir knight, said Sir Marhaus, I have well felt that ye are a passing good knight and a marvellous man of might as ever I felt any, while it lasteth, and our quarrels are not great, and therefore it were pity to do you hurt, for I feel ye are passing feeble. Ah, said Sir Gawaine, gentle knight, ye say the word that I should say. And therewith they took off their helms, and either kissed other, and there they swore together either to love other as brethren. And Sir Marhaus prayed Sir Gawaine to lodge with him that night. And so they took their horses, and rode toward Sir Marhaus's house. And as they rode by the way, Sir knight, said Sir Gawaine, I have marvel that so valiant a man as ye be love no ladies nor damosels. Sir, said Sir Marhaus, they name me wrongfully those that give me that name, but well I wot it be the damosels of the turret that so name me, and other such as they be; now shall I tell you for what cause I hate them: for they be sorceresses and enchanters many of them, and be a knight never so good of his body and full of prowess as man may be, they will make him a stark coward to have the better of him, and this is the principal cause that I hate them; and to all good ladies and gentlewomen I owe my service as a knight ought to do. As the book rehearseth in French,

there were many knights that overmatched Sir Gawaine, for all the thrice might that he had: Sir Launcelot de Lake, Sir Tristram, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Percivale, Sir Pelleas, and Sir Marhaus, these six knights had the better of Sir Gawaine. Then within a little while they came to Sir Marhaus's place, which was in a little priory, and there they alit, and ladies and damosels unarmed them, and hastily looked to their hurts, for they were all three hurt. And so they had all three good lodging with Sir Marhaus, and good cheer; for when he wist that they were King Arthur's sisters' sons he made them all the cheer that lay in his power, and so they sojourned there a sennight, and were well eased of their wounds, and at the last departed. Now, said Sir Marhaus, we will not depart so lightly, for I will bring you through the forest; and rode day by day well a seven days or they found any adventure. At the last they came into a great forest, that was named the country and forest of Arroy, and the country of strange adventures. In this country, said Sir Marhaus, came never knight syne it was christened, but he found strange adventures, and so they rode, and came into a deep valley full of stones, and thereby they saw a fair stream of water; above thereby was the head of the stream a fair fountain, and three damosels sitting thereby. And then they rode to them, and either saluted other, and the eldest had a garland of gold about her head, and she was three score winter of age or more, and her hair was white under the garland. The second damosel was of thirty

The three knights seek adventures

They meet three damosels

winter of age, with a circlet of gold about her head. The third damosel was but fifteen year of age, and a garland of flowers about her head. When these knights had so beheld them, they asked them the cause why they sat at that fountain? We be here, said the damosels, for this cause: if we may see any errant knights, to teach them unto strange adventures; and ye be three knights that seeken adventures, and we be three damosels, and therefore each one of you must choose one of us; and when ye have done so we will lead you unto three highways, and there each of you shall choose a way and his damosel with him. And this day twelvemonth ye must meet here again, and God send you your lives, and thereto ye must plight your troth. This is well said, said Sir Marhaus.

CHAPTER XIX. How Sir Marhaus, Sir Gawaine, and Sir Uwaine met three damosels, and each of them took one. Now shall every each of us choose a damosel. I shall tell you, said Sir Uwaine, I am the youngest and most weakest of you both, therefore I will have the eldest damosel, for she hath seen much, and can best help me when I have need, for I have most need of help of you both. Now, said Sir Marhaus, I will have the damosel of thirty winter age, for she falleth best to me. Well, said Sir Gawaine, I thank you, for ye have left me the youngest and the fairest, and she is most liefest to me. Then every damosel took her knight by the reins of his bridle, and brought him to the three ways, and there was

their oath made to meet at the fountain that day twelvemonth an they were living, and so they kissed and departed, and every each knight set his lady behind him. And Sir Uwaine took the way that lay west, and Sir Marhaus took the way that lay south, and Sir Gawaine took the way that lay north. Now will we begin at Sir Gawaine, that held that way till that he came unto a fair manor, where dwelled an old knight and a good householder, and there Sir Gawaine asked the knight if he knew any adventures in that country. I shall show you some to-morn, said the old knight, and that marvellous. So, on the morn they rode into the forest of adventures to a launde, and thereby they found a cross, and as they stood and hoved, there came by them the fairest knight and the seemliest man that ever they saw, making the greatest dole that ever man made. And then he was ware of Sir Gawaine, and saluted him, and prayed God to send him much worship. As to that, said Sir Gawaine, gramercy; also I pray to God that he send you honour and worship. Ah, said the knight, I may lay that a-side, for sorrow and shame cometh to me after worship.

Each knight chooses a damosel

CHAPTER XX. How a knight and a dwarf strove for a lady. And therewith he passed unto the one side of the launde; and on the other side saw Sir Gawaine ten knights that hoved still and made them ready with their shields and spears against that one knight that came by Sir Gawaine. Then this one knight aventred a great spear, and one of the ten

The dolorous knight

knights encountered with him, but this woful knight smote him so hard that he fell over his horse's tail. So this same dolorous knight served them all, that at the leastway he smote down horse and man, and all he did with one spear; and so when they were all ten on foot, they went to that one knight, and he stood stone still, and suffered them to pull him down off his horse, and bound him hand and foot, and tied him under the horse's belly, and so led him with them. O Jesu! said Sir Gawaine, this is a doleful sight, to see the yonder knight so to be entreated, and it seemeth by the knight that he suffereth them to bind him so, for he maketh no resistance. No, said his host, that is truth, for an he would they all were too weak so to do him. Sir, said the damosel unto Sir Gawaine, meseemeth it were your worship to help that dolorous knight, for methinketh he is one of the best knights that ever I saw. I would do for him, said Sir Gawaine, but it seemeth he will have no help. Then, said the damosel, methinketh ye have no lust to help him. Thus as they talked they saw a knight on the other side of the launde all armed save the head. And on the other side there came a dwarf on horseback all armed save the head, with a great mouth and a short nose; and when the dwarf came nigh he said, Where is the lady should meet us here? and therewithal she came forth out of the wood. And then they began to strive for the lady; for the knight said he would have her, and the dwarf said he would have her. Will we do well? said the dwarf;

yonder is a knight at the cross, let us put it both upon him, and as he deemeth so shall it be. I will well, said the knight, and so they went all three unto Sir Gawaine and told him wherefore they strove. Well, sirs, said he, will ye put the matter in my hand? Yea, they said both. Now damosel, said Sir Gawaine, ye shall stand betwixt them both, and whether ye list better to go to, he shall have you. And when she was set between them both, she left the knight and went to the dwarf, and the dwarf took her and went his way singing, and the knight went his way with great mourning. Then came there two knights all armed, and cried on high, Sir Gawaine! knight of King Arthur's make thee ready in all haste and joust with me. So they ran together, that either fell down, and then on foot they drew their swords, and did full actually. The meanwhile the other knight went to the damosel, and asked her why she abode with that knight, and if ye would abide with me, I will be your faithful knight. And with you will I be, said the damosel, for with Sir Gawaine I may not find in mine heart to be with him; for now here was one knight discomfited ten knights, and at the last he was cowardly led away; and therefore let us two go whilst they fight. And Sir Gawaine fought with that other knight long, but at the last they accorded both. And then the knight prayed Sir Gawaine to lodge with him that night. So as Sir Gawaine went with this knight he asked him, What knight is he in this country that smote down the ten knights? For when

The knight and the dwarf

Gawaine's damosel leaveshim

he had done so manfully he suffered them to bind him hand and foot, and so led him away. Ah, said the knight, that is the best knight I trow in the world, and the most man of prowess, and he hath been served so as he was even more than ten times, and his name hight Sir Pelleas, and he loveth a great lady in this country and her name is Ettard. And so when he loved her there was cried in this country a great jousts three days, and all the knights of this country were there and gentlewomen, and who that proved him the best knight should have a passing good sword and a circlet of gold, and the circlet the knight should give it to the fairest lady that was at the jousts. And this knight Sir Pelleas was the best knight that was there, and there were five hundred knights, but there was never man that ever Sir Pelleas met withal but he struck him down, or else from his horse; and every day of three days he struck down twenty knights, therefore they gave him the prize, and forthwithal he went thereas the lady Ettard was, and gave her the circlet, and said openly she was the fairest lady that there was, and that would he prove upon any knight that would say nay.

CHAPTER XXI. How King Pelleas suffered himself to be taken prisoner because he would have a sight of his lady, and how Sir Gawaine promised him to get to him the love of his lady. And so he chose her for his sovereign lady, and never to love other but her, but she was so proud that she had scorn of him, and said that she would never love him

He seeks the dolorous knight

though he would die for her. Wherefore all ladies and gentlewomen had scorn of her that she was so proud, for there were fairer than she, and there was none that was there but an Sir Pelleas would have proffered them love, they would have loved him for his noble prowess. And so this knight promised the lady Ettard to follow her into this country, and never to leave her till she loved him. And thus he is here the most part nigh her, and lodged by a priory, and every week she sendeth knights to fight with him. And when he hath put them to the worse, then will he suffer them wilfully to take him prisoner, because he would have a sight of this lady. And always she doth him great despite, for sometime she maketh her knights to tie him to his horse's tail, and some to bind him under the horse's belly; thus in the most shamefullest ways that she can think he is brought to her; and all she doth it for to cause him to leave this country, and to leave his loving; but all this cannot make him to leave, for an he would have fought on foot he might have had the better of the ten knights as well on foot as on horseback. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, it is great pity of him; and after this night I will seek him to-morrow, in this forest, to do him all the help I can. So on the morn Sir Gawaine took his leave of his host Sir Carados, and rode into the forest; and at the last he met with Sir Pelleas, making great moan out of measure, so each of them saluted other, and asked him why he made such sorrow. And as it is above rehearsed, Sir

and offers to help him

Pelleas told Sir Gawaine: But always I suffer her knights to fare so with me as ye saw yesterday, in trust at the last to win her love, for she knoweth well all her knights should not lightly win me, an me list to fight with them to the uttermost. Wherefore an I loved her not so sore, I had liefer die an hundred times, an I might die so oft, rather than I would suffer that despite; but I trust she will have pity upon me at the last, for love causeth many a good knight to suffer to have his entent, but alas I am unfortunate. And therewith he made so great dole and sorrow that unnethe he might hold him on horseback. Now, said Sir Gawaine, leave your mourning and I shall promise you by the faith of my body to do all that lieth in my power to get you the love of your lady, and thereto I will plight you my troth Ah, said Sir Pelleas, of what court are ye? tell me, I pray you, my good friend. And then Sir Gawaine said, I am of the court of King Arthur, and his sister's son, and King Lot of Orkney was my father, and my name is Sir Gawaine. And then he said, My name is Sir Pelleas, born in the Isles, and of many isles I am lord, and never have I loved lady nor damosel till now in an unhappy time; and, sir knight, syne ye are so nigh cousin unto King Arthur, and a king's son, therefore betray me not but help me, for I may never come by her but by some good knight, for she is in a strong castle here, fast by within this four mile, and over all this country she is lady of. And so I may never come to her presence, but as I suffer

her knights to take me, and but if I did so that I might have a sight of her, I had been dead long or this time; and yet fair word had I never of her, but when I am brought tofore her she rebuketh me in the foulest manner, and then they take my horse and harness and putten me out of the gates, and she will not suffer me to eat nor drink; and always I offer me to be her prisoner, but that she will not suffer me, for I would desire no more, what pains so ever I had, so that I might have a sight of her daily. Well, said Sir Gawaine, all this shall I amend an ye will do as I shall devise: I will have your horse and your armour, and so will I ride unto her castle and tell her that I have slain you, and so shall I come within her to cause her to cherish me, and then shall I do my true part that ye shall not fail to have the love of her.

He goes to the lady's castle

CHAPTER XXII. How Sir Gawaine came to the Lady Ettard, and how Sir Pelleas found them sleeping. And therewith Sir Gawaine plight his troth unto Sir Pelleas to be true and faithful unto him; so each one plight their troth to other, and so they changed horses and harness, and Sir Gawaine departed, and came to the castle whereas stood the pavilions of this lady without the gate. And as soon as Ettard had espied Sir Gawaine she fled in toward the castle. Sir Gawaine spake on high, and bade her abide, for he was not Sir Pelleas; I am another knight that have slain Sir Pelleas. Do off your helm, said the Lady Ettard, that I may see your visage. And so when she saw

and gains her love

that it was not Sir Pelleas, she bade him alight and led him unto her castle, and asked him faithfully whether he had slain Sir Pelleas. And he said her yea, and told her his name was Sir Gawaine of the court of King Arthur, and his sister's son. Truly, said she, that is great pity, for he was a passing good knight of his body, but of all men a-live I hated him most, for I could never be quit of him; and for ye have slain him I shall be your woman, and to do anything that might please you. So she made Sir Gawaine good cheer. Then Sir Gawaine said that he loved a lady and by no means she would love him. She is to blame, said Ettard, an she will not love you, for ye that be so well born a man, and such a man of prowess, there is no lady in the world too good for you. Will ye, said Sir Gawaine, promise me to do all that ye may, by the faith of your body, to get me the love of my lady? Yea, sir, said she, and that I promise you by the faith of my body. Now, said Sir Gawaine, it is yourself that I love so well, therefore I pray you hold your promise. I may not choose, said the Lady Ettard, but if I should be forsworn; and so she granted him to fulfil all his desire. So it was then in the month of May that she and Sir Gawaine went out of the castle and supped in a pavilion, and there was made a bed, and there Sir Gawaine and the Lady Ettard went to bed together, and in another pavilion she laid her damosels, and in the third pavilion she laid part of her knights, for then she had no dread of Sir Pelleas. And there

He stays in the castle

Sir Gawaine lay with her in that pavilion two days and two nights. And on the third day, in the morning early, Sir Pelleas armed him, for he had never slept syne Sir Gawaine departed from him; for Sir Gawaine had promised him by the faith of his body, to come to him unto his pavilion by that priory within the space of a day and a night. Then Sir Pelleas mounted upon horseback, and came to the pavilions that stood without the castle, and found in the first pavilion three knights in three beds, and three squires lying at their feet. Then went he to the second pavilion and found four gentlewomen lying in four beds. And then he yede to the third pavilion and found Sir Gawaine lying in bed with his Lady Ettard, and either clipping other in arms, and when he saw that his heart wellnigh brast for sorrow, and said: Alas! that ever a knight should be found so false; and then he took his horse and might not abide no longer for pure sorrow. And when he had ridden nigh half a mile he turned again and thought to slay them both; and when he saw them both so lie sleeping fast, unnethe he might hold him on horseback for sorrow, and said thus to himself, Though this knight be never so false, I will never slay him sleeping, for I will never destroy the high order of knighthood; and therewith he departed again. And or he had ridden half a mile he returned again, and thought then to slay them both, making the greatest sorrow that ever man made. And when he came to the pavilions, he tied his horse unto a tree, and pulled out his sword naked in

The dolorous knight comes to seek Gawaine

his hand, and went to them thereas they lay, and yet he thought it were shame to slay them sleeping, and laid the naked sword overthwart both their throats, and so took his horse and rode his way. And when Sir Pelleas came to his pavilions he told his knights and his squires how he had sped, and said thus to them, For your true and good service ye have done me I shall give you all my goods, for I will go unto my bed and never arise until I am dead. And when that I am dead I charge you that ye take the heart out of my body and bear it her betwixt two silver dishes, and tell her how I saw her lie with the false knight Sir Gawaine. Right so Sir Pelleas unarmed himself, and went unto his bed making marvellous dole and sorrow. When Sir Gawaine and Ettard awoke of their sleep, and found the naked sword overthwart their throats, then she knew well it was Sir Pelleas' sword. Alas! said she to Sir Gawaine, ye have betrayed me and Sir Pelleas both, for ye told me ye had slain him, and now I know well it is not so, he is a-live. And if Sir Pelleas had been as uncourteous to you as ye have been to him ye had been a dead knight; but ye have deceived me and betrayed me falsely, that all ladies and damosels may beware by you and me. And therewith Sir Gawaine made him ready, and went into the forest. So it happed then that the damosel of the lake Nimue met with a knight of Sir Pelleas, that went on his foot in the forest making great dole, and she asked him the cause. And so the woful knight told her how his master and

lord was betrayed through a knight and lady, and how he will never arise out of his bed till he be dead. Bring me to him, said she anon, and I will warrant his life he shall not die for love, and she that hath caused him so to love, she shall be in as evil plight as he is or it be long to, for it is no joy of such a proud lady that will have no mercy of such a valiant knight. Anon that knight brought her unto him, and when she saw him lie in his bed, she thought she saw never so likely a knight; and therewith she threw an enchantment upon him, and he fell a-sleep. And therewhile she rode unto the Lady Ettard, and charged no man to awake him till she came again. So within two hours she brought the Lady Ettard thither, and both ladies found him a-sleep: Lo, said the damosel of the lake, ye ought to be ashamed for to murder such a knight. And therewith she threw such an enchantment upon her that she loved him sore, that well nigh she was out of her mind. O Lord Jesu, said the Lady Ettard, how is it befallen unto me that I love now him that I have most hated of any man alive? That is the righteous judgment of God, said the damosel. And then anon Sir Pelleas awaked and looked upon Ettard; and when he saw her he knew her, and then he hated her more than any woman alive, and said: Away, traitress, come never in my sight. And when she heard him say so, she wept and made great sorrow out of measure.

and finds he has been betrayed

His love is turned to hate

CHAPTER XXIII. How Sir Pelleas loved no more Ettard by means of the damosel of the lake, whom he loved ever after. Sir knight Pelleas, said the damosel of the lake, take your horse and come forth with me out of this country, and ye shall love a lady that shall love you. I will well, said Sir Pelleas, for this lady Ettard hath done me great despite and shame, and there he told her the beginning and ending, and how he had purposed never to have arisen till that he had been dead.—And now such grace God hath sent me, that I hate her as much as ever I loved her, thanked be our Lord Jesus! Thank me, said the damosel of the lake. Anon Sir Pelleas armed him, and took his horse, and commanded his men to bring after his pavilions and his stuff where the damosel of the lake would assign. So the Lady Ettard died for sorrow, and the damosel of the lake rejoiced Sir Pelleas, and loved together during their life days.

CHAPTER XXIV. How Sir Marhaus rode with the damosel, and how he came to the duke of the South Marches. Now turn we unto Sir Marhaus, that rode with the damosel of thirty winter of age, southward. And so they came into a deep forest, and by fortune they were nighted, and rode long in a deep way, and at the last they came unto a courtelage, and there they asked harbour. But the man of the courtelage would not lodge them for no treatise that they could treat, but thus

much the good man said, An ye will take the adventure of your lodging, I shall bring you where ye shall be lodged. What adventure is that that I shall have for my lodging? said Sir Marhaus. Ye shall wit when ye come there, said the good man. Sir, what adventure so it be, bring me thither I pray thee, said Sir Marhaus; for I am weary, my damosel, and my horse. So the good man went and opened the gate, and within an hour he brought him unto a fair castle, and then the poor man called the porter, and anon he was let into the castle, and so he told the lord how he brought him a knight errant and a damosel that would be lodged with him. Let him in, said the lord, it may happen he shall repent that they took their lodging here. So Sir Marhaus was let in with torch-light, and there was a goodly sight of young men that welcomed him. And then his horse was led into the stable, and he and the damosel were brought into the hall, and there stood a mighty duke and many goodly men about him. Then this lord asked him what he hight, and from whence he came, and with whom he dwelt. Sir, he said, I am a knight of King Arthur's and knight of the Table Round, and my name is Sir Marhaus, and born I am in Ireland. And then said the duke to him, That me sore repenteth: the cause is this, for I love not thy lord nor none of thy fellows of the Table Round; and therefore ease thyself this night as well as thou mayest, for as to-morn I and my six sons shall match with you. Is there no remedy but that I must have ado with you

Sir Marhaus' adventures

He meets the Duke of South Marches

and your six sons at once? said Sir Marhaus. No, said the duke, for this cause I made mine avow, for Sir Gawaine slew my seven sons in a recounter, therefore I made mine avow, there should never knight of King Arthur's court lodge with me, or come thereas I might have ado with him, but that I would have a revenging of my sons' death. What is your name? said Sir Marhaus; I require you tell me, an it please you. Wit thou well I am the Duke of South Marches. Ah, said Sir Marhaus, I have heard say that ye have been long time a great foe unto my lord Arthur and to his knights. That shall ye feel to-morn, said the duke. Shall I have ado with you? said Sir Marhaus. Yea, said the duke, thereof shalt thou not choose, and therefore take you to your chamber, and ye shall have all that to you longeth. So Sir Marhaus departed and was led to a chamber, and his damosel was led unto her chamber. And on the morn the duke sent unto Sir Marhaus and bade make him ready. And so Sir Marhaus arose and armed him, and then there was a mass sung afore him, and brake his fast, and so mounted on horseback in the court of the castle where they should do the battle. So there was the duke all ready on horseback, clean armed, and his six sons by him, and every each had a spear in his hand, and so they encountered, whereas the duke and his two sons brake their spears upon him, but Sir Marhaus held up his spear and touched none of them.

CHAPTER XXV. How Sir Marhaus fought with the duke and his four sons and made them to yield them. Then came the four sons by couple, and two of them brake their spears, and so did the other two. And all this while Sir Marhaus touched them not. Then Sir Marhaus ran to the duke, and smote him with his spear that horse and man fell to the earth, and so he served his sons; and then Sir Marhaus alit down and bade the duke yield him or else he would slay him. And then some of his sons recovered, and would have set upon Sir Marhaus; then Sir Marhaus said to the duke, Cease thy sons, or else I will do the uttermost to you all. When the duke saw he might not escape the death, he cried to his sons, and charged them to yield them to Sir Marhaus; and they kneeled all down and put the pommels of their swords to the knight, and so he received them. And then they helped up their father, and so by their cominal assent promised to Sir Marhaus never to be foes unto King Arthur, and thereupon at Whitsuntide after, to come he and his sons, and put them in the king's grace. Then Sir Marhaus departed, and within two days his damosel brought him whereas was a great tournament that the Lady de Vawse had cried. And who that did best should have a rich circlet of gold worth a thousand besauntes. And there Sir Marhaus did so nobly that he was renowned, and had sometime down forty knights, and so the circlet of gold was rewarded him. Then he departed from thence with great worship;

and does battle with him and his six sons

He encounters with a giant

and so within seven nights his damosel brought him to an earl's place, his name was the Earl Fergus, that after was Sir Tristram's knight; and this earl was but a young man, and late come into his lands, and there was a giant fast by him that hight Taulurd, and he had another brother in Cornwall that hight Taulas, that Sir Tristram slew when he was out of his mind. So this earl made his complaint unto Sir Marhaus, that there was a giant by him that destroyed all his lands, and how he durst nowhere ride nor go for him. Sir, said the knight, whether useth he to fight, on horseback or on foot? Nay, said the earl, there may no horse bear him. Well, said Sir Marhaus, then will I fight with him on foot; so on the morn Sir Marhaus prayed the earl that one of his men might bring him whereas the giant was; and so he was, for he saw him sit under a tree of holly, and many clubs of iron and gisarms about him. So this knight dressed him to the giant, putting his shield afore him, and the giant took an iron club in his hand, and at the first stroke he clave Sir Marhaus' shield in two pieces. And there he was in great peril, for the giant was a wily fighter, but at last Sir Marhaus smote off his right arm above the elbow. Then the giant fled and the knight after him, and so he drove him into a water, but the giant was so high that he might not wade after him. And then Sir Marhaus made the Earl Fergus' man to fetch him stones, and with those stones the knight gave the giant many sore knocks, till at the last

he made him fall down into the water, and so was he there dead. Then Sir Marhaus went unto the giant's castle, and there he delivered twenty-four ladies and twelve knights out of the giant's prison, and there he had great riches without number, so that the days of his life he was never poor man. Then he returned to the Earl Fergus, the which thanked him greatly, and would have given him half his lands, but he would none take. So Sir Marhaus dwelled with the earl nigh half a year, for he was sore bruised with the giant, and at the last he took his leave. And as he rode by the way, he met with Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine, and so by adventure he met with four knights of Arthur's court, the first was Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Osanna, Sir Dodinas le Savage, and Sir Felot of Listinoise; and there Sir Marhaus with one spear smote down these four knights, and hurt them sore. So he departed to meet at his day aforeset.

and slays him

CHAPTER XXVI. How Sir Uwaine rode with the damosel of sixty year of age, and how he gat the prize at tourneying. Now turn we unto Sir Uwaine, that rode westward with his damosel of three score winter of age, and she brought him thereas was a tournament nigh the march of Wales. And at that tournament Sir Uwaine smote down thirty knights, therefore was given him the prize, and that was a gerfalcon, and a white steed trapped with cloth of gold. So then Sir Uwaine did many strange adventures by the means of the old damosel,

Sir Uwaine's adventures

and so she brought him to a lady that was called the Lady of the Rock, the which was much courteous. So there were in the country two knights that were brethren, and they were called two perilous knights, the one knight hight Sir Edward of the Red Castle, and the other Sir Hue of the Red Castle; and these two brethren had disherited the Lady of the Rock of a barony of lands by their extortion. And as this knight was lodged with this lady she made her complaint to him of these two knights. Madam, said Sir Uwaine, they are to blame, for they do against the high order of knighthood, and the oath that they made; and if it like you I will speak with them, because I am a knight of King Arthur's, and I will entreat them with fairness; and if they will not, I shall do battle with them, and in the defence of your right. Gramercy, said the lady, and thereas I may not acquit you, God shall. So on the morn the two knights were sent for, that they should come thither to speak with the Lady of the Rock, and wit ye well they failed not, for they came with an hundred horse. But when this lady saw them in this manner so big, she would not suffer Sir Uwaine to go out to them upon no surety nor for no fair language, but she made him speak with them over a tower, but finally these two brethren would not be entreated, and answered that they would keep that they had. Well, said Sir Uwaine, then will I fight with one of you, and prove that ye do this lady wrong. That will we not, said they, for an we do battle, we two will fight

with one knight at once, and therefore if ye will fight so, we will be ready at what hour ye will assign. And if ye win us in battle the lady shall have her lands again. Ye say well, said Sir Uwaine, therefore make you ready so that ye be here to-morn in the defence of the lady's right.

He fights with two knights

CHAPTER XXVII. How Sir Uwaine fought with two knights and overcame them. So was there sikerness made on both parties that no treason should be wrought on neither party; so then the knights departed and made them ready, and that night Sir Uwaine had great cheer. And on the morn he arose early and heard mass, and brake his fast, and so he rode unto the plain without the gates, where hoved the two brethren abiding him. So they rode together passing sore, that Sir Edward and Sir Hue brake their spears upon Sir Uwaine. And Sir Uwaine smote Sir Edward that he fell over his horse and yet his spear brast not. And then he spurred his horse and came upon Sir Hue and overthrew him, but they soon recovered and dressed their shields and drew their swords and bade Sir Uwaine alight and do his battle to the uttermost. Then Sir Uwaine devoided his horse suddenly, and put his shield afore him and drew his sword, and so they dressed together, and either gave other such strokes, and there these two brethren wounded Sir Uwaine passing grievously that the Lady of the Rock weened he should have died. And thus they fought together

and overcomes them

five hours as men raged out of reason. And at the last Sir Uwaine smote Sir Edward upon the helm such a stroke that his sword carved unto his canel bone, and then Sir Hue abated his courage, but Sir Uwaine pressed fast to have slain him. That saw Sir Hue: he kneeled down and yielded him to Sir Uwaine. And he of his gentleness received his sword, and took him by the hand, and went into the castle together. Then the Lady of the Rock was passing glad, and the other brother made great sorrow for his brother's death. Then the lady was restored of all her lands, and Sir Hue was commanded to be at the Court of King Arthur at the next feast of Pentecost. So Sir Uwaine dwelt with the lady nigh half a year, for it was long or he might be whole of his great hurts. And so when it drew nigh the term-day that Sir Gawaine, Sir Marhaus, and Sir Uwaine should meet at the cross-way, then every knight drew him thither to hold his promise that they had made; and Sir Marhaus and Sir Uwaine brought their damosels with them, but Sir Gawaine had lost his damosel as it is afore rehearsed.

CHAPTER XXVIII. How at the year's end all three knights with their three damosels met at the fountain. Right so at the twelve-months' end they met all three knights at the fountain and their damosels, but the damosel that Sir Gawaine had could say but little worship of him; so they departed from the damosels and rode through a great forest, and

there they met with a messenger that came from King Arthur, that had sought them well nigh a twelvemonth throughout all England, Wales, and Scotland, and charged if ever he might find Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine to bring them to the court again. And then were they all glad, and so prayed they Sir Marhaus to ride with them to the king's court. And so within twelve days they came to Camelot, and the king was passing glad of their coming, and so was all the court. Then the king made them to swear upon a book to tell him all their adventures that had befallen them that twelvemonth, and so they did. And there was Sir Marhaus well-known, for there were knights that he had matched aforetime, and he was named one of the best knights living. Against the feast of Pentecost came the damosel of the Lake and brought with her Sir Pelleas; and at that high feast there was great jousting of knights, and of all knights that were at that jousts, Sir Pelleas had the prize, and Sir Marhaus was named the next; but Sir Pelleas was so strong there might but few knights sit him a buffet with a spear. And at that next feast Sir Pelleas and Sir Marhaus were made knights of the Table Round, for there were two sieges void, for two knights were slain that twelvemonth, and great joy had King Arthur of Sir Pelleas and of Sir Marhaus. But Pelleas loved never after Sir Gawaine, but as he spared him for the love of King Arthur; but ofttimes at jousts and tournaments Sir Pelleas quit Sir Gawaine, for so it rehearseth in the book of

The meeting at the year's end

The new knights of the Table Round

French. So Sir Tristram many days after fought with Sir Marhaus in an island, and there they did a great battle, but at the last Sir Tristram slew him, so Sir Tristram was wounded that unnethe he might recover, and lay at a nunnery half a year. And Sir Pelleas was a worshipful knight, and was one of the four that achieved the sangreal, and the damosel of the Lake made by her means that never he had ado with Sir Launcelot de Lake, for where Sir Launcelot was at any jousts or any tournament, she would not suffer him be there that day, but if it were on the side of Sir Launcelot.

Explicit Liber Quartus.

Incipit Liber Quintus.

BOOK V

CHAPTER I. How twelve aged ambassadors of Rome came to King Arthur to demand truage for Britain. When King Arthur had after long war rested, and held a royal feast and Table Round with his allies of kings, princes, and noble knights all of the Round Table, there came into his hall, he sitting in his throne royal, twelve ancient men, bearing each of them a branch of olive, in token that they came as ambassadors and messengers from the Emperor Lucius, which was called at that time, Dictator or Procuror of the Public Weal of Rome; which said messengers, after their entering and coming into the presence of King Arthur, did to him their obeisance in making to him reverence, and said to him in this wise: The high and mighty Emperor Lucius sendeth to the King of Britain greeting, commanding thee to acknowledge him for thy lord, and to send him the truage due of this realm unto the Empire, which thy father and other tofore thy precessors have paid as is of record, and thou as rebel not knowing him as thy sovereign, withholdest and retainest contrary to the statutes and decrees made by the noble and worthy Julius Cesar, conqueror of this realm, and first Emperor of Rome. And if thou refuse his demand and commandment, know thou for certain that he shall make strong war against

The message from Rome

The entertainment of the messengers

thee, thy realms and lands, and shall chastise thee and thy subjects, that it shall be ensample perpetual unto all kings and princes, for to deny their truage unto that noble empire which domineth upon the universal world. Then when they had showed the effect of their message, the king commanded them to withdraw them, and said he should take advice of council and give to them an answer. Then some of the young knights, hearing this their message, would have run on them to have slain them, saying that it was a rebuke to all the knights there being present to suffer them to say so to the king. And anon the king commanded that none of them, upon pain of death, to missay them nor do them any harm, and commanded a knight to bring them to their lodging, and see that they have all that is necessary and requisite for them, with the best cheer, and that no dainty be spared, for the Romans be great lords, and though their message please me not nor my court, yet I must remember mine honour. After this the king let call all his lords and knights of the Round Table to counsel upon this matter, and desired them to say their advice. Then Sir Cador of Cornwall spake first and said, Sir, this message liketh me well, for we have many days rested us and have been idle, and now I hope ye shall make sharp war on the Romans, where I doubt not we shall get honour. I believe well, said Arthur, that this matter pleaseth thee well, but these answers may not be answered, for the demand grieveth me sore, for truly I will never

pay truage to Rome, wherefore I pray you to counsel me. I have understood that Belinus and Brenius, kings of Britain, have had the empire in their hands many days, and also Constantine the son of Heleine, which is an open evidence that we owe no tribute to Rome, but of right we that be descended of them have right to claim the title of the empire.

Arthur calls his knights in council

CHAPTER II. How the kings and lords promised to King Arthur aid and help against the Romans. Then answered King Anguish of Scotland, Sir, ye ought of right to be above all other kings, for unto you is none like nor pareil in Christendom, of knighthood nor of dignity, and I counsel you never to obey the Romans, for when they reigned on us they distressed our elders, and put this land to great extortions and tallies, wherefore I make here mine avow to avenge me on them; and for to strengthen your quarrel I shall furnish twenty thousand good men of war, and wage them on my costs, which shall await on you with myself when it shall please you. And the king of Little Britain granted him to the same thirty thousand; wherefore King Arthur thanked them. And then every man agreed to make war, and to aid after their power; that is to wit, the lord of West Wales promised to bring thirty thousand men, and Sir Uwaine, Sir Ider his son, with their cousins, promised to bring thirty thousand. Then Sir Launcelot with all other promised in likewise every man a great multitude. And when King Arthur under-

Arthur's answer to Rome

stood their courages and good wills he thanked them heartily, and after let call the ambassadors to hear their answer. And in presence of all his lords and knights he said to them in this wise: I will that ye return unto your lord and Procuror of the Common Weal for the Romans, and say ye to him, Of his demand and commandment I set nothing, and that I know of no truage nor tribute that I owe to him, nor to none earthly prince, Christian nor heathen; but I pretend to have and occupy the sovereignty of the empire, wherein I am entitled by the right of my predecessors, sometime kings of this land; and say to him that I am delibered and fully concluded, to go with mine army with strength and power unto Rome, by the grace of God, to take possession in the empire and subdue them that be rebel. Wherefore I command him and all them of Rome, that incontinent they make to me their homage, and to acknowledge me for their Emperor and Governor, upon pain that shall ensue. And then he commanded his treasurer to give to them great and large gifts, and to pay all their dispenses, and assigned Sir Cador to convey them out of the land. And so they took their leave and departed, and took their shipping at Sandwich, and passed forth by Flanders, Almaine, the mountains, and all Italy, until they came unto Lucius. And after the reverence made, they made relation of their answer, like as ye tofore have heard. When the Emperor Lucius had well understood their credence, he was sore moved as he had been all araged,

Its reception by Lucius

and said, I had supposed that Arthur would have obeyed to my commandment, and have served you himself, as him well beseemed or any other king to do. O Sir, said one of the senators, let be such vain words, for we let you wit that I and my fellows were full sore afeared to behold his countenance; I fear me ye have made a rod for yourself, for he intendeth to be lord of this empire, which sore is to be doubted if he come, for he is all another man than ye ween, and holdeth the most noble court of the world, all other kings nor princes may not compare unto his noble maintenance. On New Year's Day we saw him in his estate, which was the royalest that ever we saw, for he was served at his table with nine kings, and the noblest fellowship of other princes, lords, and knights that be in the world, and every knight approved and like a lord, and holdeth Table Round: and in his person the most manly man that liveth, and is like to conquer all the world, for unto his courage it is too little: wherefore I advise you to keep well your marches and straits in the mountains; for certainly he is a lord to be doubted. Well, said Lucius, before Easter I suppose to pass the mountains, and so forth into France, and there bereave him his lands with Genoese and other mighty warriors of Tuscany and Lombardy. And I shall send for them all that be subjects and allied to the empire of Rome to come to mine aid. And forthwith sent old wise knights unto these countries following: first to Ambage and Arrage,

Lucius' army

to Alexandria, to India, to Armenia, whereas the river of Euphrates runneth into Asia, to Africa, and Europe the Large, to Ertayne and Elamye, to Araby, Egypt, and to Damascus, to Damietta and Cayer, to Cappadocia, to Tarsus, Turkey, Pontus and Pamphylia, to Syria and Galatia. And all these were subject to Rome and many more, as Greece, Cyprus, Macedonia, Calabria, Cateland, Portugal, with many thousands of Spaniards. Thus all these kings, dukes, and admirals, assembled about Rome, with sixteen kings at once, with great multitude of people. When the emperor understood their coming he made ready his Romans and all the people between him and Flanders. Also he had gotten with him fifty giants which had been engendered of fiends; and they were ordained to guard his person, and to break the front of the battle of King Arthur. And thus departed from Rome, and came down the mountains for to destroy the lands that Arthur had conquered, and came unto Cologne, and besieged a castle thereby, and won it soon, and stuffed it with two hundred Saracens or Infidels, and after destroyed many fair countries which Arthur had won of King Claudas. And thus Lucius came with all his host which were disperplyd sixty mile in breadth, and commanded them to meet with him in Burgoyne, for he purposed to destroy the realm of Little Britain.

CHAPTER III. How King Arthur held a parliament at York, and how he ordained the realm should be governed in his absence.

Arthur leaves for the war

Now leave we of Lucius the Emperor and speak we of King Arthur, that commanded all them of his retinue to be ready at the utas of Hilary for to hold a Parliament at York. And at that parliament was concluded to arrest all the navy of the land, and to be ready within fifteen days at Sandwich, and there he showed to his army how he purposed to conquer the empire which he ought to have of right. And there he ordained two governors of this realm, that is to say, Sir Bawdwin of Britain, for to counsel to the best, and Sir Constantine, son to Sir Cador of Cornwall, which after the death of Arthur was king of this realm. And in the presence of all his lords he resigned the rule of the realm and Guenever his queen to them, wherefore Sir Launcelot was wroth, for he left Sir Tristram with King Mark for the love of Beale Isould. Then the Queen Guenever made great sorrow for the departing of her lord and other, and swooned in such wise that the ladies bare her into her chamber. Thus the king with his great army departed, leaving the queen and realm in the governance of Sir Bawdwin and Constantine. And when he was on his horse he said with an high voice, If I die in this journey I will that Sir Constantine be mine heir and king crowned of this realm as next of my blood. And after departed and entered into the sea at Sandwich with all his army, with a great multitude of ships, galleys, cogges, and dromoundes, sailing on the sea.

Arthur's marvellous dream

CHAPTER IV. How King Arthur being shipped and lying in his cabin had a marvellous dream and of the exposition thereof. And as the king lay in his cabin in the ship, he fell in a slumbering and dreamed a marvellous dream: him seemed that a dreadful dragon did drown much of his people, and he came flying out of the west, and his head was enamelled with azure, and his shoulders shone as gold, his belly like mails of a marvellous hue, his tail full of tatters, his feet full of fine sable, and his claws like fine gold; and an hideous flame of fire flew out of his mouth, like as the land and water had flamed all of fire. After, him seemed there came out of the orient, a grimly boar all black in a cloud, and his paws as big as a post; he was rugged looking roughly, he was the foulest beast that ever man saw, he roared and romed so hideously that it were marvel to hear. Then the dreadful dragon advanced him and came in the wind like a falcon giving great strokes on the boar, and the boar hit him again with his grizzly tusks that his breast was all bloody, and that the hot blood made all the sea red of his blood. Then the dragon flew away all on an height, and came down with such a swough, and smote the boar on the ridge, which was ten foot large from the head to the tail, and smote the boar all to powder both flesh and bones, that it flittered all abroad on the sea. And therewith the king awoke anon, and was sore abashed of this dream, and sent anon for a wise philosopher, commanding to tell him the signification of his dream. Sir,

said the philosopher, the dragon that thou dreamedst of betokeneth thine own person that sailest here, and the colours of his wings be thy realms that thou hast won, and his tail which is all to-tattered signifieth the noble knights of the Round Table; and the boar that the dragon slew coming from the clouds betokeneth some tyrant that tormenteth the people, or else thou art like to fight with some giant thyself, being horrible and abominable, whose peer ye saw never in your days, wherefore of this dreadful dream doubt thee nothing, but as a conqueror come forth thyself. Then after this soon they had sight of land, and sailed till they arrived at Barflete in Flanders, and when they were there he found many of his great lords ready, as they had been commanded to wait upon him.

The signification of the dream

CHAPTER V. How a man of the country told to him of a marvellous giant, and how he fought and conquered him. Then came to him an husbandman of the country, and told him how there was in the country of Constantine, beside Brittany, a great giant which had slain, murdered, and devoured much people of the country, and had been sustained seven year with the children of the commons of that land, insomuch that all the children be all slain and destroyed; and now late he hath taken the Duchess of Brittany as she rode with her meiny, and hath led her to his lodging which is in a mountain, for to ravish and lie by her to her life's end, and many people followed her, more than five hundred, but all they might not rescue

Arthur hears of a marvellous giant

her, but they left her shrieking and crying lamentably, wherefore I suppose that he hath slain her in fulfilling his foul lust of lechery. She was wife unto thy cousin Sir Howell, whom we call full nigh of thy blood. Now, as thou art a rightful king, have pity on this lady, and revenge us all as thou art a noble conqueror. Alas, said King Arthur, this is a great mischief, I had liefer than the best realm that I have that I had been a furlong way tofore him for to have rescued that lady. Now, fellow, said King Arthur, canst thou bring me thereas this giant haunteth? Yea, Sir, said the good man, look yonder whereas thou seest those two great fires, there shalt thou find him, and more treasure than I suppose is in all France. When the king had understood this piteous case, he returned into his tent. Then he called to him Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, and commanded them secretly to make ready horse and harness for himself and them twain; for after evensong he would ride on pilgrimage with them two only unto Saint Michael's mount. And then anon he made him ready, and armed him at all points, and took his horse and his shield. And so they three departed thence and rode forth as fast as ever they might till that they came to the foreland of that mount. And there they alighted, and the king commanded them to tarry there, for he would himself go up into that mount. And so he ascended up into that hill till he came to a great fire, and there he found a careful widow wringing her hands and making great sorrow, sitting by a grave new made. And then

King Arthur saluted her, and demanded of her wherefore she made such lamentation, to whom she answered and said, Sir knight, speak soft, for yonder is a devil, if he hear thee speak he will come and destroy thee; I hold thee unhappy; what dost thou here in this mountain? for if ye were such fifty as ye be, ye were not able to make resistance against this devil: here lieth a duchess dead, the which was the fairest of all the world, wife to Sir Howell, Duke of Brittany, he hath murdered her in forcing her, and hath slit her unto the navel. Dame, said the king, I come from the noble conqueror King Arthur, for to treat with that tyrant for his liege people. Fie on such treaties, said she, he setteth not by the king nor by no man else; but an if thou have brought Arthur's wife, dame Guenever, he shall be gladder than thou hadst given to him half France. Beware, approach him not too nigh, for he hath vanquished fifteen kings, and hath made him a coat full of precious stones enbroidered with their beards, which they sent him to have his love for salvation of their people at this last Christmas. And if thou wilt, speak with him at yonder great fire at supper. Well, said Arthur, I will accomplish my message for all your fearful words; and went forth by the crest of that hill, and saw where he sat at supper gnawing on a limb of a man, baking his broad limbs by the fire, and breechless, and three fair damosels turning three broaches whereon were broached twelve young children late born, like young birds. When King Arthur beheld that piteous sight he had

and goes to seek him

He fights with the giant

great compassion on them, so that his heart bled for sorrow, and hailed him saying in this wise: He that all the world wieldeth give thee short life and shameful death; and the devil have thy soul; why hast thou murdered these young innocent children, and murdered this duchess? Therefore, arise and dress thee, thou glutton, for this day shalt thou die of my hand. Then the glutton anon started up, and took a great club in his hand, and smote at the king that his coronal fell to the earth. And the king hit him again that he carve his belly and cut off his genitours, that his guts and his entrails fell down to the ground. Then the giant threw away his club, and caught the king in his arms that he crushed his ribs. Then the three maidens kneeled down and called to Christ for help and comfort of Arthur. And then Arthur weltered and wrung, that he was other while under and another time above. And so weltering and wallowing they rolled down the hill till they came to the sea mark, and ever as they so weltered Arthur smote him with his dagger. And it fortuned they came to the place whereas the two knights were and kept Arthur's horse; then when they saw the king fast in the giant's arms they came and loosed him. And then the king commanded Sir Kay to smite off the giant's head, and to set it upon a truncheon of a spear, and bear it to Sir Howell, and tell him that his enemy was slain; and after let this head be bounden to a barbican that all the people may see and behold it; and go ye two up to the mountain, and fetch me my shield, my

sword, and the club of iron; and as for the treasure, take ye it, for ye shall find there goods out of number; so I have the kirtle and the club I desire no more. This was the fiercest giant that ever I met with, save one in the mount of Araby, which I overcame, but this was greater and fiercer. Then the knights fetched the club and the kirtle, and some of the treasure they took to themselves, and returned again to the host. And anon this was known through all the country, wherefore the people came and thanked the king. And he said again, Give the thanks to God, and depart the goods among you. And after that King Arthur said and commanded his cousin Howell, that he should ordain for a church to be builded on the same hill in the worship of Saint Michael. And on the morn the king removed with his great battle, and came into Champayne and in a valley, and there they pight their tents; and the king being set at his dinner, there came in two messengers, of whom that one was Marshal of France, and said to the king that the emperor was entered into France, and had destroyed a great part, and was in Burgoyne, and had destroyed and made great slaughter of people, and burnt towns and boroughs; wherefore, if thou come not hastily, they must yield up their bodies and goods.

and conquers him

CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur sent Sir Gawaine and other to Lucius, and how they were assailed and escaped with worship.

Then the king did do call Sir Gawaine, Sir

Sir Gawaine sent to Lucius

Bors, Sir Lionel, and Sir Bedivere, and commanded them to go straight to Sir Lucius, and say ye to him that hastily he remove out of my land; and if he will not, bid him make him ready to battle and not distress the poor people. Then anon these noble knights dressed them to horseback, and when they came to the green wood, they saw many pavilions set in a meadow, of silk of divers colours, beside a river, and the emperor's pavilion was in the middle with an eagle displayed above. To the which tent our knights rode toward, and ordained Sir Gawaine and Sir Bors to do the message, and left in a bushment Sir Lionel and Sir Bedivere. And then Sir Gawaine and Sir Bors did their message, and commanded Lucius, in Arthur's name to avoid his land, or shortly to address him to battle. To whom Lucius answered and said, Ye shall return to your lord, and say ye to him that I shall subdue him and all his lands. Then Sir Gawaine was wroth and said, I had liefer than all France fight against thee; and so had I, said Sir Bors, liefer than all Britany or Burgoyne. Then a knight named Sir Gainus, nigh cousin to the emperor, said, Lo, how these Britons be full of pride and boast, and they brag as though they bare up all the world. Then Sir Gawaine was sore grieved with these words, and pulled out his sword and smote off his head. And therewith turned their horses and rode over waters and through woods till they came to their bushment, whereas Sir Lionel and Sir Bedivere were hoving. The Romans followed fast after, on horseback and

on foot, over a champaign unto a wood; then Sir Bors turned his horse and saw a knight come fast on, whom he smote through the body with a spear that he fell dead down to the earth; then came Caliburn one of the strongest of Pavie, and smote down many of Arthur's knights. And when Sir Bors saw him do so much harm, he addressed toward him, and smote him through the breast, that he fell down dead to the earth. Then Sir Feldenak thought to revenge the death of Gainus upon Sir Gawaine, but Sir Gawaine was ware thereof, and smote him on the head, which stroke stinted not till it came to his breast. And then he returned and came to his fellows in the bushment. And there was a recounter, for the bushment brake on the Romans, and slew and hew down the Romans, and forced the Romans to flee and return, whom the noble knights chased unto their tents. Then the Romans gathered more people, and also foot-men came on, and there was a new battle, and so much people that Sir Bors and Sir Berel were taken. But when Sir Gawaine saw that, he took with him Sir Idrus the good knight, and said he would never see King Arthur but if he rescued them, and pulled out Galatine his good sword, and followed them that led those two knights away; and he smote him that led Sir Bors, and took Sir Bors from him and delivered him to his fellows. And Sir Idrus in likewise rescued Sir Berel. Then began the battle to be great, that our knights were in great jeopardy, wherefore Sir Gawaine sent to King Arthur for

An encounter with the Romans

Roman ambuscade put to flight

succour, and that he hie him, for I am sore wounded, and that our prisoners may pay goods out of number. And the messenger came to the king and told him his message. And anon the king did do assemble his army, but anon, or he departed the prisoners were come, and Sir Gawaine and his fellows gat the field and put the Romans to flight, and after returned and came with their fellowship in such wise that no man of worship was lost of them, save that Sir Gawaine was sore hurt. Then the king did do ransack his wounds and comforted him. And thus was the beginning of the first journey of the Britons and Romans, and there were slain of the Romans more than ten thousand, and great joy and mirth was made that night in the host of King Arthur. And on the morn he sent all the prisoners into Paris under the guard of Sir Launcelot, with many knights, and of Sir Cador.

CHAPTER VII. How Lucius sent certain spies in a bushment for to have taken his knights being prisoners, and how they were letted. Now turn we to the Emperor of Rome, which espied that these prisoners should be sent to Paris, and anon he sent to lie in a bushment certain knights and princes with sixty thousand men, for to rescue his knights and lords that were prisoners. And so on the morn as Launcelot and Sir Cador, chieftains and governors of all them that conveyed the prisoners, as they should pass through a wood, Sir Launcelot sent certain knights to espy if any

were in the woods to let them. And when the said knights came into the wood, anon they espied and saw the great embushment, and returned and told Sir Launcelot that there lay in await for them three score thousand Romans. And then Sir Launcelot with such knights as he had, and men of war to the number of ten thousand, put them in array, and met with them and fought with them manly, and slew and dretched many of the Romans, and slew many knights and admirals of the party of the Romans and Saracens; there was slain the king of Lyly and three great lords, Aladuke, Herawd, and Heringdale. But Sir Launcelot fought so nobly that no man might endure a stroke of his hand, but where he came he showed his prowess and might, for he slew down right on every side; and the Romans and Saracens fled from him as the sheep from the wolf or from the lion, and put them all that abode alive to flight. And so long they fought that tidings came to King Arthur, and anon he graithed him and came to the battle, and saw his knights how they had vanquished the battle, he embraced them knight by knight in his arms, and said, Ye be worthy to wield all your honour and worship; there was never king save myself that had so noble knights. Sir, said Cador, there was none of us failed other, but of the prowess and manhood of Sir Launcelot were more than wonder to tell, and also of his cousins which did that day many noble feats of war. And also Sir Cador told who of his knights were slain, as Sir Beriel, and

Launcelot's deeds of valour

Lucius prepares for battle

other Sir Moris and Sir Maurel, two good knights. Then the king wept, and dried his eyes with a kerchief, and said, Your courage had near hand destroyed you, for though ye had returned again, ye had lost no worship; for I call it folly, knights to abide when they be overmatched. Nay, said Launcelot and the other, for once shamed may never be recovered.

CHAPTER VIII. How a senator told to Lucius of their discomfiture, and also of the great battle between Arthur and Lucius.

Now leave we King Arthur and his noble knights which had won the field, and had brought their prisoners to Paris, and speak we of a senator which escaped from the battle, and came to Lucius the emperor, and said to him, Sir emperor, I advise thee for to withdraw thee; what dost thou here? thou shalt win nothing in these marches but great strokes out of all measure, for this day one of Arthur's knights was worth in the battle an hundred of ours. Fie on thee, said Lucius, thou speakest cowardly; for thy words grieve me more than all the loss that I had this day. And anon he sent forth a king, which hight Sir Leomie, with a great army, and bade him hie him fast tofore, and he would follow hastily after. King Arthur was warned privily, and sent his people to Sessoine, and took up the towns and castles from the Romans. Then the king commanded Sir Cador to take the rearward, and to take with him certain knights of the Round Table,—And Sir Launcelot, Sir Bors,

Sir Kay, Sir Marrok, with Sir Marhaus, shall **The battle**
await on our person. Thus the King Arthur disperplyd his host in divers parties, to the end that his enemies should not escape. When the emperor was entered into the vale of Sessoine, he might see where King Arthur was embattled and his banner displayed; and he was beset round about with his enemies, that needs he must fight or yield him, for he might not flee, but said openly unto the Romans, Sirs, I admonish you that this day ye fight and acquit you as men, and remember how Rome domineth and is chief and head over all the earth and universal world, and suffer not these Britons this day to abide against us; and therewith he did command his trumpets to blow the bloody sounds, in such wise that the ground trembled and dindled. Then the battles approached and shove and shouted on both sides, and great strokes were smitten on both sides, many men overthrown, hurt, and slain; and great valiances, prowesses and appertices of war were that day showed, which were over long to recount the noble feats of every man, for they should contain an whole volume. But in especial, King Arthur rode in the battle exhorting his knights to do well, and himself did as nobly with his hands as was possible a man to do; he drew out Excalibur his sword, and awaited ever whereas the Romans were thickest and most grieved his people, and anon he addressed him on that part, and hew and slew down right, and rescued his people; and he slew a great giant named Galapas, which

Arthur slays Lucius

was a man of an huge quantity and height, he shorted him and smote off both his legs by the knees, saying, Now art thou better of a size to deal with than thou were, and after smote off his head. There Sir Gawaine fought nobly and slew three admirals in that battle. And so did all the knights of the Round Table. Thus the battle between King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor endured long. Lucius had on his side many Saracens which were slain. And thus the battle was great, and oftsides that one party was at a fordele and anon at an afterdele, which endured so long till at the last King Arthur espied where Lucius the Emperor fought, and did wonder with his own hands. And anon he rode to him. And either smote other fiercely, and at last Lucius smote Arthur thwart the visage, and gave him a large wound And when King Arthur felt himself hurt, anon he smote him again with Excalibur that it cleft his head, from the summit of his head, and stinted not till it came to his breast. And then the emperor fell down dead and there ended his life. And when it was known that the emperor was slain, anon all the Romans with all their host put them to flight, and King Arthur with all his knights followed the chase, and slew down right all them that they might attain. And thus was the victory given to King Arthur, and the triumph; and there were slain on the part of Lucius more than an hundred thousand. And after King Arthur did do ransack the dead bodies, and did do bury them that were slain of his retinue, every man according to the estate

and degree that he was of. And them that were hurt he let the surgeons do search their hurts and wounds, and commanded to spare no salves nor medicines till they were whole. Then the king rode straight to the place where the Emperor Lucius lay dead, and with him he found slain the Soudan of Syria, the King of Egypt and of Ethiopia, which were two noble kings, with seventeen other kings of divers regions, and also sixty senators of Rome, all noble men, whom the king did do balm and gum with many good gums aromatic, and after did do cere them in sixty fold of cered cloth of Sendal, and laid them in chests of lead, because they should not chafe nor savour, and upon all these bodies their shields with their arms and banners were set, to the end they should be known of what country they were. And after he found three senators which were a-live, to whom he said, For to save your lives I will that ye take these dead bodies, and carry them with you unto great Rome, and present them to the Potestate on my behalf, shewing him my letters, and tell them that I in my person shall hastily be at Rome. And I suppose the Romans shall beware how they shall demand any tribute of me. And I command you to say when ye shall come to Rome, to the Potestate and all the Council and Senate, that I send to them these dead bodies for the tribute that they have demanded. And if they be not content with these, I shall pay more at my coming, for other tribute owe I none, nor none other will I pay. And methinketh this sufficeth for

Defeat of the Romans

Arthur's further progress

Britain, Ireland and all Almaine with Germany And furthermore, I charge you to say to them, that I command them upon pain of their heads never to demand tribute nor tax of me nor of my lands. Then with this charge and commandment, the three senators aforesaid departed with all the said dead bodies, laying the body of Lucius in a car covered with the arms of the Empire all alone; and after alway two bodies of kings in a chariot, and then the bodies of the senators after them, and so went toward Rome, and showed their legation and message to the Potestate and Senate, recounting the battle done in France, and how the field was lost and much people and innumerable slain. Wherefore they advised them in no wise to move no more war against that noble conqueror Arthur, for his might and prowess is most to be doubted, seeing the noble kings and great multitude of knights of the Round Table, to whom none earthly prince may compare.

CHAPTER IX. How Arthur, after he had achieved the battle against the Romans, entered into Almaine, and so into Italy.

Now turn we unto King Arthur and his noble knights, which, after the great battle achieved against the Romans, entered into Loraine, Brabant and Flanders, and sithen returned into Haut Almaine, and so over the mountains into Lombardy, and after, into Tuscany wherein was a city which in no wise would yield themself nor obey, wherefore King Arthur besieged it, and lay long about it, and gave many assaults

to the city; and they within defended them valiantly. Then, on a time, the king called Sir Florence, a knight, and said to him they lacked victual, And not far from hence be great forests and woods, wherein be many of mine enemies with much bestial: I will that thou make thee ready and go thither in foraging, and take with thee Sir Gawaine my nephew, Sir Wisshard, Sir Clegis, Sir Cleremond, and the Captain of Cardiff with other, and bring with you all the beasts that ye there can get. And anon these knights made them ready, and rode over holts and hills, through forests and woods, till they came into a fair meadow full of fair flowers and grass; and there they rested them and their horses all that night. And in the springing of the day in the next morn, Sir Gawaine took his horse and stole away from his fellowship, to seek some adventures. And anon he was ware of a man armed, walking his horse easily by a wood side, and his shield laced to his shoulder, sitting on a strong courser, without any man saving a page bearing a mighty spear. The knight bare in his shield three griffins of gold, in sable carbuncle, the chief of silver. When Sir Gawaine espied this gay knight, he feutred his spear, and rode straight to him, and demanded of him from whence that he was. That other answered and said he was of Tuscany, and demanded of Sir Gawaine, What, profferest thou, proud knight, thee so boldly? here gettest thou no prey, thou mayest prove what thou wilt, for thou shalt be my prisoner or thou depart. Then said Gawaine, thou avauntest thee greatly

Gawaine and the Tuscan knight

They fight

and speakest proud words, I counsel thee for all thy boast that thou make thee ready, and take thy gear to thee, tofore greater grame fall to thee.

CHAPTER X. Of a battle done by Sir Gawaine against a Saracen, which after was yielden and became Christian. Then they took their spears and ran each at other with all the might they had, and smote each other through their shields into their shoulders, wherefore anon they pulled out their swords, and smote great strokes that the fire sprang out of their helms. Then Sir Gawaine was all abashed, and with Galatine his good sword he smote through shield and thick hauberk made of thick mails, and all to-rushed and break the precious stones, and made him a large wound, that men might see both liver and lung. Then groaned that knight, and addressed him to Sir Gawaine, and with an awke stroke gave him a great wound and cut a vein, which grieved Gawaine sore, and he bled sore. Then the knight said to Sir Gawaine, bind thy wound or thy bleeding change, for thou be-bleedest all thy horse and thy fair arms, for all the barbers of Brittany shall not con staunch thy blood, for whosomever is hurt with this blade he shall never be staunched of bleeding. Then answered Gawaine, it grieveth me but little, thy great words shall not fear me nor lessen my courage, but thou shalt suffer tene and sorrow or we depart, but tell me in haste who may staunch my bleeding. That may I do, said the knight,

if I will, and so will I if thou wilt succour and aid me, that I may be christened and believe on God, and thereof I require thee of thy manhood, and it shall be great merit for thy soul. I grant, said Gawaine, so God help me, to accomplish all thy desire, but first tell me what thou soughtest here thus alone, and of what land and liegiance thou art of. Sir, he said, my name is Priamus, and a great prince is my father, and he hath been rebel unto Rome and overridden many of their lands. My father is lineally descended of Alexander and of Hector by right line. And Duke Joshua and Maccabæus were of our lineage. I am right inheritor of Alexandria and Africa, and all the out isles, yet will I believe on thy Lord that thou believest on; and for thy labour I shall give thee treasure enough. I was so elate and haughty in my heart that I thought no man my peer, nor to me semblable. I was sent into this war with seven score knights, and now I have encountered with thee, which hast given to me of fighting my fill, wherefore sir knight, I pray thee to tell me what thou art. I am no knight, said Gawayne, I have been brought up in the guardrobe with the noble King Arthur many years, for to take heed to his armour and his other array, and to point his paltockes that long to himself. At yule last he made me yeoman, and gave to me horse and harness, and an hundred pound in money; and if fortune be my friend, I doubt not but to be well advanced and holpen by my liege lord. Ah, said Priamus, if his knaves be so keen and fierce, his knights be

Gawaine wounded

The knight gives Gawaine tidings

passing good: now for the King's love of Heaven, whether thou be a knave or a knight, tell thou me thy name. By God, said Sir Gawaine, now I will say thee sooth, my name is Sir Gawaine, and known I am in his court and in his chamber, and one of the knights of the Round Table, he dubbed me a duke with his own hand. Therefore grudge not if this grace is to me fortuned, it is the goodness of God that lent to me my strength. Now am I better pleased, said Priamus, than thou hadst given to me all the Provence and Paris the rich. I had liefer to have been torn with wild horses, than any varlet had won such loos, or any page or priker should have had prize on me. But now sir knight I warn thee that hereby is a Duke of Lorraine with his army, and the noblest men of Dolphiny, and lords of Lombardy, with the garrison of Godard, and Saracens of Southland, that numbered sixty-thousand of good men of arms; wherefore but if we hie us hence, it will harm us both, for we be sore hurt, never like to recover; but take heed to my page, that he no horn blow, for if he do, there be hoving here fast by an hundred knights awaiting on my person, and if they take thee, there shall no ransom of gold nor silver acquit thee. Then Sir Gawaine rode over a water for to save him, and the knight followed him, and so rode forth till they came to his fellows which were in the meadow, where they had been all the night. Anon as Sir Wisshard was ware of Sir Gawaine and saw that he was hurt, he ran to him sorrowfully weeping, and

demanded of him who had so hurt him; and Gawaine told how he had foughten with that man, and each of them had hurt other, and how he had salves to heal them; but I can tell you other tidings, that soon we shall have ado with many enemies. Then Sir Priamus and Sir Gawaine alighted, and let their horses graze in the meadow, and unarmed them, and then the blood ran freshly from their wounds. And Priamus took from his page a phial full of the four waters that came out of paradise, and with certain balm anointed their wounds, and washed them with that water, and within an hour after they were both as whole as ever they were. And then with a trumpet were they all assembled to council, and there Priamus told unto them what lords and knights had sworn to rescue him, and that without fail they should be assailed with many thousands, wherefore he counselled them to withdraw them. Then Sir Gawaine said, it were great shame to them to avoid without any strokes; Wherefore I advise to take our arms and to make us ready to meet with these Saracens and misbelieving men, and with the help of God we shall overthrow them and have a fair day on them. And Sir Florence shall abide still in this field to keep the stale as a noble knight, and we shall not forsake yonder fellows. Now, said Priamus, cease your words, for I warn you ye shall find in yonder woods many perilous knights; they will put forth beasts to call you on, they be out of number, and ye are not past seven hundred, which be over few to fight with so many.

Gawaine's wounds healed

Fight with the Saracens

Nevertheless said Sir Gawaine we shall once encounter them, and see what they can do, and the best shall have the victory.

CHAPTER XI. How the Saracens came out of a wood for to rescue their beasts, and of a great battle. Then Sir Florence called to him Sir Floridas, with an hundred knights, and drove forth the herd of beasts. Then followed him seven hundred men of arms; and Sir Ferant of Spain on a fair steed came springing out of the woods, and came to Sir Florence and asked him why he fled. Then Sir Florence took his spear and rode against him, and smote him in the forehead and brake his neck bone. Then all the other were moved, and thought to avenge the death of Sir Ferant, and smote in among them, and there was great fight, and many slain and laid down to ground, and Sir Florence with his hundred knights alway kept the stale, and fought manly Then when Priamus the good knight perceived the great fight, he went to Sir Gawaine, and bade him that he should go and succour his fellowship, which were sore bestead with their enemies. Sir, grieve you not, said Sir Gawaine, for their gree shall be theirs. I shall not once move my horse to them ward, but if I see more than there be; for they be strong enough to match them. And with that he saw an earl called Sir Ethelwold, and the duke of Dutchmen come leaping out of a wood with many thousands, and Priamus' knights, and come straight unto the battle. Then Sir Gawaine

comforted his knights, and bade them not to be abashed, for all shall be ours. Then they began to wallop and met with their enemies, there were men slain and overthrown on every side. Then thrust in among them the knights of the Table Round, and smote down to the earth all them that withstood them, in so much that they made them to recoil and flee. By God, said Sir Gawaine, this gladdeth my heart, for now be they less in number by twenty thousand. Then entered into the battle Jubance a giant, and fought and slew downright, and distressed many of our knights, among whom was slain Sir Gherard, a knight of Wales. Then our knights took heart to them, and slew many Saracens. And then came in Sir Priamus with his pennon, and rode with the knights of the Round Table, and fought so manfully that many of their enemies lost their lives. And there Sir Priamus slew the Marquis of Moises land, and Sir Gawaine with his fellows so quit them that they had the field, but in that stour was Sir Chestelaine, a child and ward of Sir Gawaine slain, wherefore was much sorrow made, and his death was soon avenged. Thus was the battle ended, and many lords of Lombardy and Saracens left dead in the field. Then Sir Florence and Sir Gawaine harboured surely their people, and took great plenty of bestial, of gold and silver, and great treasure and riches, and returned unto King Arthur, which lay still at the siege. And when they came to the king they presented their prisoners and recounted

Saracens defeated

Arthur besieges a city

their adventures, and how they had vanquished their enemies.

CHAPTER XII. How Sir Gawaine returned to King Arthur with his prisoners, and how the King won a city, and how he was crowned Emperor. Now thanked be God, said the noble King Arthur. But what manner man is he that standeth by himself, him seemeth no prisoner. Sir, said Gawaine, this is a good man of arms, he hath matched me, but he is yielden unto God, and to me, for to become Christian; had not he have been we should never have returned, wherefore I pray you that he may be baptised, for there liveth not a nobler man nor better knight of his hands. Then the king let him anon be christened, and did do call him his first name Priamus, and made him a duke and knight of the Table Round. And then anon the king let do cry assault to the city, and there was rearing of ladders, breaking of walls, and the ditch filled, that men with little pain might enter into the city. Then came out a duchess, and Clarisin the countess, with many ladies and damosels, and kneeling before King Arthur, required him for the love of God to receive the city, and not to take it by assault, for then should many guiltless be slain. Then the king avaled his visor with a meek and noble countenance, and said, Madam, there shall none of my subjects misdo you nor your maidens, nor to none that to you belong, but the duke shall abide my judgment. Then anon the king commanded to leave the assault, and anon the

duke's oldest son brought out the keys, and kneeling delivered them to the king, and besought him of grace; and the king seized the town by assent of his lords, and took the duke and sent him to Dover, there for to abide prisoner term of his life, and assigned certain rents for the dower of the duchess and for her children. Then he made lords to rule those lands, and laws as a lord ought to do in his own country; and after he took his journey toward Rome, and sent Sir Floris and Sir Floridas tofore, with five hundred men of arms, and they came to the city of Urbino and laid there a bushment, thereas them seemed most best for them, and rode tofore the town, where anon issued out much people and skirmished with the fore-riders. Then brake out the bushment and won the bridge, and after the town, and set upon the walls the king's banner. Then came the king upon an hill, and saw the city and his banner on the walls, by which he knew that the city was won. And anon he sent and commanded that none of his liege men should defoul nor lie by no lady, wife, nor maiden; and when he came into the city, he passed to the castle, and comforted them that were in sorrow, and ordained there a captain, a knight of his own country. And when they of Milan heard that thilk city was won, they sent to King Arthur great sums of money, and besought him as their lord to have pity on them, promising to be his subjects for ever, and yield to him homage and fealty for the lands of Pleasance and Pavia, Petersaint, and the Port of

The city yielded

Arthur crowned Emperor of Rome

Tremble, and to give him yearly a million of gold all his lifetime. Then he rideth into Tuscany, and winneth towns and castles, and wasted all in his way that to him will not obey, and so to Spolute and Viterbe, and from thence he rode into the Vale of Vicecount among the vines. And from thence he sent to the senators, to wit whether they would know him for their lord. But soon after on a Saturday came unto King Arthur all the senators that were left a-live, and the noblest cardinals that then dwelt in Rome, and prayed him of peace, and proferred him full large, and besought him as governor to give licence for six weeks for to assemble all the Romans, and then to crown him emperor with chrism as it belongeth to so high estate. I assent, said the king, like as ye have devised, and at Christmas there to be crowned, and to hold my Round Table with my knights as me liketh. And then the senators made ready for his enthronization. And at the day appointed, as the romance telleth, he came into Rome, and was crowned emperor by the pope's hand, with all the royalty that could be made, and sojourned there a time, and established all his lands from Rome into France, and gave lands and realms unto his servants and knights, to every each after his desert, in such wise that none complained, rich nor poor. And he gave to Sir Priamus the duchy of Lorraine; and he thanked him, and said he would serve him the days of his life; and after made dukes and earls, and made every man rich. Then after this all

his knights and lords assembled them afore him, and said: Blessed be God, your war is finished and your conquest achieved, in so much that we know none so great nor mighty that dare make war against you: wherefore we beseech you to return homeward, and give us licence to go home to our wives, from whom we have been long, and to rest us, for your journey is finished with honour and worship. Then said the king, Ye say truth, and for to tempt God it is no wisdom, and therefore make you ready and return we into England. Then there was trussing of harness and baggage and great carriage. And after licence given, he returned and commanded that no man in pain of death should not rob nor take victual, nor other thing by the way but that he should pay therefore. And thus he came over the sea and landed at Sandwich, against whom Queen Guenever his wife came and met him, and he was nobly received of all his commons in every city and burgh, and great gifts presented to him at his home-coming to welcome him with.

He returns home

Thus endeth the fifth book of the conquest that King Arthur had against Lucius the Emperor of Rome, and here followeth the sixth book, which is of Sir Launcelot du Lake.

BOOK VI

Sir Launcelot

CHAPTER I. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Lionel departed from the court, and how Sir Lionel left him sleeping and was taken.

Soon after that King Arthur was come from Rome into England, then all the knights of the Table Round resorted unto the king, and made many jousts and tournaments, and some there were that were but knights, which increased so in arms and worship that they passed all their fellows in prowess and noble deeds, and that was well proved on many; but in especial it was proved on Sir Launcelot du Lake, for in all tournaments and jousts and deeds of arms, both for life and death, he passed all other knights, and at no time he was never overcome but if it were by treason or enchantment, so Sir Launcelot increased so marvellously in worship, and in honour, therefore is he the first knight that the French book maketh mention of after King Arthur came from Rome. Wherefore Queen Guenever had him in great favour above all other knights, and in certain he loved the queen again above all other ladies and damosels of his life, and for her he did many deeds of arms, and saved her from the fire through his noble chivalry. Thus Sir Launcelot rested him long with play and game. And then he thought himself to prove himself in strange adventures, then he

bade his nephew, Sir Lionel, for to make him ready; for we two will seek adventures. So they mounted on their horses, armed at all rights, and rode into a deep forest and so into a deep plain. And then the weather was hot about noon, and Sir Launcelot had great lust to sleep. Then Sir Lionel espied a great apple-tree that stood by an hedge, and said, Brother, yonder is a fair shadow, there may we rest us on our horses. It is well said, fair brother, said Sir Launcelot, for this eight year I was not so sleepy as I am now; and so they there alighted and tied their horses unto sundry trees, and so Sir Launcelot laid him down under an apple-tree, and his helm he laid under his head. And Sir Lionel waked while he slept. So Sir Launcelot was asleep passing fast. And in the meanwhile there came three knights riding, as fast fleeing as ever they might ride. And there followed them three but one knight. And when Sir Lionel saw him, him thought he saw never so great a knight, nor so well faring a man, neither so well apparelled unto all rights. So within a while this strong knight had overtaken one of these knights, and there he smote him to the cold earth that he lay still. And then he rode unto the second knight, and smote him so that man and horse fell down. And then straight to the third knight he rode, and smote him behind his horse arse a spear length. And then he alit down and reined his horse on the bridle, and bound all the three knights fast with the reins of their own bridles. When Sir Lionel saw him do thus, he thought to

Launcelot and Lionel seek adventures

Lionel made prisoner

assay him, and made him ready, and stilly and privily he took his horse, and thought not for to awake Sir Launcelot. And when he was mounted upon his horse, he overtook this strong knight, and bade him turn, and the other smote Sir Lionel so hard that horse and man he bare to the earth, and so he alit down and bound him fast, and threw him overthwart his own horse, and so he served them all four, and rode with them away to his own castle. And when he came there he garte unarm them, and beat them with thorns all naked, and after put them in a deep prison where were many more knights that made great dolour

CHAPTER II. How Sir Ector followed for to seek Sir Launcelot, and how he was taken by Sir Turquine. When Sir Ector de Maris wist that Sir Launcelot was passed out of the court to seek adventures, he was wroth with himself, and made him ready to seek Sir Launcelot, and as he had ridden long in a great forest he met with a man was like a forester. Fair fellow, said Sir Ector, knowest thou in this country any adventures that be here nigh hand? Sir, said the forester, this country know I well, and hereby, within this mile, is a strong manor, and well dyked, and by that manor, on the left hand, there is a fair ford for horses to drink of, and over that ford there groweth a fair tree, and thereon hang many fair shields that wielded sometime good knights, and at the hole of the tree hangeth a basin of copper and laton, and strike upon that basin with the butt

Sir Ector follows Launcelot

of thy spear thrice, and soon after thou shalt hear new tidings, and else hast thou the fairest grace that many a year had ever knight that passed through this forest. Gramercy, said Sir Ector, and departed and came to the tree, and saw many fair shields. And among them he saw his brother's shield, Sir Lionel, and many more that he knew that were his fellows of the Round Table, the which grieved his heart, and he promised to revenge his brother. Then anon Sir Ector beat on the basin as he were wood, and then he gave his horse drink at the ford, and there came a knight behind him and bade him come out of the water and make him ready; and Sir Ector anon turned him shortly, and in feuter cast his spear, and smote the other knight a great buffet that his horse turned twice about. This was well done, said the strong knight, and knightly thou hast stricken me; and therewith he rushed his horse on Sir Ector, and cleight him under his right arm, and bare him clean out of the saddle, and rode with him away into his own hall, and threw him down in middes of the floor. The name of this knight was Sir Turquine. Then he said unto Sir Ector, For thou hast done this day more unto me than any knight did these twelve years, now will I grant thee thy life, so thou wilt be sworn to be my prisoner all thy life days. Nay, said Sir Ector, that will I never promise thee, but that I will do mine advantage. That me repenteth, said Sir Turquine. And then he garte to unarm him, and beat him with

and is taken prisoner

thorns all naked, and sithen put him down in a deep dungeon, where he knew many of his fellows. But when Sir Ector saw Sir Lionel, then made he great sorrow. Alas, brother, said Sir Ector, where is my brother Sir Launcelot? Fair brother, I left him a-sleep when that I from him yode, under an apple tree, and what is become of him I cannot tell you. Alas, said the knights, but Sir Launcelot help us we may never be delivered, for we know now no knight that is able to match our master Turquine.

CHAPTER III. How four queens found Launcelot sleeping, and how by enchantment he was taken and led into a castle.

Now leave we these knights prisoners, and speak we of Sir Launcelot du Lake that lieth under the Apple Tree sleeping. Even about the noon there come by him four queens of great estate; and, for the heat should not annoy them, there rode four knights about them, and bare a cloth of green silk on four spears, betwixt them and the sun, and the queens rode on four white mules. Thus as they rode they heard by them a great horse grimly neigh, then were they ware of a sleeping knight, that lay all armed under an apple tree; anon as these queens looked on his face, they knew it was Sir Launcelot. Then they began for to strive for that knight, every each one said they would have him to her love. We shall not strive, said Morgan le Fay, that was King Arthur's sister, I shall put an enchantment upon him

Launcelot and the four queens

that he shall not awake in six hours, and then I will lead him away unto my castle, and when he is surely within my hold, I shall take the enchantment from him, and then let him choose which of us he will have unto paramour. So this enchantment was cast upon Sir Launcelot, and then they laid him upon his shield, and bare him so on horseback betwixt two knights, and brought him unto the castle Chariot, and there they laid him in a chamber cold, and at night they sent unto him a fair damosel with his supper ready dight. By that the enchantment was past, and when she came she saluted him, and asked him what cheer. I cannot say, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, for I wot not how I came into this castle but it be by an enchantment. Sir, said she, ye must make good cheer, and if ye be such a knight as it is said ye be, I shall tell you more to-morn by prime of the day. Gramercy, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, of your good will I require you. And so she departed. And there he lay all on that night without comfort of anybody. And on the morn early came these four queens, passingly well beseen, all they bidding him good morn, and he them again. Sir knight, the four queens said, thou must understand thou art our prisoner, and we here know thee well that thou art Sir Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son, and because we understand your worthiness, that thou art the noblest knight living, and as we know well there can no lady have thy love but one, and that is Queen Guenever, and now thou shalt lose her for ever, and she thee, and

Launcelot taken by enchantment

therefore thee behoveth now to choose one of us four. I am the Queen Morgan le Fay, queen of the land of Gore, and here is the queen of Northgalis, and the queen of Eastland, and the queen of the Out Isles; now choose one of us which thou wilt have to thy paramour, for thou mayest not choose or else in this prison to die. This is an hard case, said Sir Launcelot, that either I must die or else chose one of you, yet had I liefer to die in this prison with worship, than to have one of you to my paramour maugre my head. And therefore ye be answered, I will none of you, for ye be false enchantresses, and as for my lady, Dame Guenever, were I at my liberty as I was, I would prove it on you or on yours, that she is the truest lady unto her lord living. Well, said the queens, is this your answer, that ye will refuse us. Yea, on my life, said Sir Launcelot, refused ye be of me. So they departed and left him there alone and made great sorrow.

CHAPTER IV. How Sir Launcelot was delivered by the mean of a damosel. Right so at the noon came the damosel unto him with his dinner, and asked him what cheer. Truly, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, in my life days never so ill. Sir, she said, that me repentest, but an ye will be ruled by me, I shall help you out of this distress, and ye shall have no shame nor villainy, so that ye hold me a promise. Fair damosel, I will grant you, and sore I am of these queen-sorceresses afeard, for they have destroyed many a good knight. Sir, said she,

that is sooth, and for the renown and bounty that they hear of you they would have your love, and Sir, they say, your name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of knights, and they be passing wroth with you that ye have refused them. But Sir, an ye would promise me to help my father on Tuesday next coming, that hath made a tournament betwixt him and the king of Northgalis; for the last Tuesday past my father lost the field through three knights of Arthur's court; an ye will be there on Tuesday next coming, and help my father, to-morn or prime, by the grace of God, I shall deliver you clean. Fair maiden, said Sir Launcelot, tell me what is your father's name, and then shall I give you an answer. Sir knight, she said, my father is King Bagdemagus, that was foul rebuked at the last tournament. I know your father well, said Sir Launcelot, for a noble king and a good knight, and by the faith of my body, ye shall have my body ready to do your father and you service at that day. Sir, she said, gramercy, and to-morn await ye be ready betimes, and I shall be she that shall deliver you, and take you your armour and your horse, shield and spear, and hereby, within this ten mile, is an abbey of white monks, there I pray you that ye me abide, and thither shall I bring my father unto you. All this shall be done, said Sir Launcelot, as I am true knight. And so she departed, and came on the morn early, and found him ready; then she brought him out of twelve locks, and brought him unto his armour, and when he was clean

Launcelot delivered

He fights with a knight

armed, she brought him until his own horse, and lightly he saddled him and took a great spear in his hand, and so rode forth, and said, Fair damosel, I shall not fail you by the grace of God. And so he rode into a great forest all that day, and never could find no highway, and so the night fell on him, and then was he ware in a slade, of a pavilion of red sendal. By my faith, said Sir Launcelot, in that pavilion will I lodge all this night, and so there he alit down, and tied his horse to the pavilion, and there he unarmed him, and there he found a bed, and laid him therein and fell a-sleep sadly.

CHAPTER V. How a knight found Sir Launcelot lying in his leman's bed, and how Sir Launcelot fought with the knight.

Then within an hour there came the knight to whom the pavilion ought, and he weened that his leman had lain in that bed, and so he laid him down beside Sir Launcelot, and took him in his arms and began to kiss him. And when Sir Launcelot felt a rough beard kissing him, he started out of the bed lightly, and the other knight after him, and either of them gat their swords in their hands, and out at the pavilion door went the knight of the pavilion, and Sir Launcelot followed him, and there by a little slake Sir Launcelot wounded him sore, nigh unto the death. And then he yielded him unto Sir Launcelot, and so he granted him, so that he would tell him why he came in to the bed. Sir, said the knight, the pavilion is mine own, and there this night I had assigned my lady to

have slept with me, and now I am likely to die of this wound. That me repenteth, said Launcelot, of your hurt, but I was adread of treason, for I was late beguiled, and therefore come on your way into your pavilion and take your rest, and as I suppose I shall staunch your blood. And so they went both into the pavilion, and anon Sir Launcelot staunched his blood. Therewithal came the knight's lady, that was a passing fair lady, and when she espied that her Lord Belleus was sore wounded, she cried out on Sir Launcelot, and made great dole out of measure. Peace, my lady and my love, said Belleus, for this knight is a good man, and a knight adventurous, and there he told her all the cause how he was wounded; And when that I yielded me unto him, he left me goodly and hath staunched my blood. Sir, said the lady, I require thee tell me what knight ye be, and what is your name? Fair lady, he said, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. So me thought ever by your speech, said the lady, for I have seen you oft or this, and I know you better than ye ween. But now an ye would promise me of your courtesy, for the harms that ye have done to me and my Lord Belleus, that when he cometh unto Arthur's court for to cause him to be made knight of the Round Table, for he is a passing good man of arms, and a mighty lord of lands of many out isles. Fair lady, said Sir Launcelot, let him come unto the court the next high feast, and look that ye come with him, and I shall do my power, an ye prove you doughty of your hands,

and overcomes him

Launcelot reaches the abbey

that ye shall have your desire. So thus within a while as they thus talked the night passed, and the day shone, and then Sir Launcelot armed him, and took his horse, and they taught him to the Abbey, and thither he rode within the space of two hours.

CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot was received of King Bagdemagus' daughter, and how he made his complaint to her father. And soon as Sir Launcelot came within the abbey yard, the daughter of King Bagdemagus heard a great horse go on the pavement. And she then arose and yede unto a window, and there she saw Sir Launcelot, and anon she made men fast to take his horse from him and let lead him into a stable, and himself was led into a fair chamber, and unarmed him, and the lady sent him a long gown, and anon she came herself. And then she made Launcelot passing good cheer, and she said he was the knight in the world was most welcome to her. Then in all haste she sent for her father Bagdemagus that was within twelve mile of that Abbey, and afore even he came with a fair fellowship of knights with him. And when the king was alit off his horse he yode straight unto Sir Launcelot's chamber and there he found his daughter, and then the king embraced Sir Launcelot in his arms, and either made other good cheer. Anon Sir Launcelot made his complaint unto the king how he was betrayed, and how his brother Sir Lionel was departed from him he wist not where, and how

his daughter had delivered him out of prison; Therefore while I live I shall do her service and all her kindred. Then am I sure of your help, said the king, on Tuesday next coming? Yea, sir, said Sir Launcelot, I shall not fail you, for so I have promised my lady your daughter. But, sir, what knights be they of my lord Arthur's that were with the King of Northgalis? And the king said it was Sir Mador de la Porte, and Sir Mordred and Sir Gahalantine that all for-fared my knights, for against them three I nor my knights might bear no strength. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, as I hear say that the tournament shall be here within this three mile of this abbey, ye shall send unto me three knights of yours, such as ye trust, and look that the three knights have all white shields, and I also, and no painture on the shields, and we four will come out of a little wood in middes of both parties, and we shall fall in the front of our enemies and grieve them that we may; and thus shall I not be known what knight I am. So they took their rest that night, and this was on the Sunday, and so the king departed, and sent unto Sir Launcelot three knights with the four white shields. And on the Tuesday they lodged them in a little leaved wood beside where the tournament should be. And there were scaffolds and holes that lords and ladies might behold and to give the prize. Then came into the field the king of Northgalis with eight score helms. And then the three knights of Arthur's stood by themselves. Then came into the field King Bagdemagus with four score of helms.

He promises Bagdemagus help

Launcelot at the tournament

And then they feutred their spears, and came together with a great dash, and there were slain of knights at the first recounter twelve of King Bagdemagus' party, and six of the King of Northgalis' party, and King Bagdemagus' party was far set aback.

CHAPTER VII. How Sir Launcelot behaved him in a tournament, and how he met with Sir Turquine leading Sir Gaheris.

With that came Sir Launcelot du Lake, and he thrust in with his spear in the thickest of the press, and there he smote down with one spear five knights, and of four of them he brake their backs. And in that throng he smote down the King of Northgalis, and brake his thigh in that fall. All this doing of Sir Launcelot saw the three knights of Arthur's. Yonder is a shrewd guest, said Sir Mador de la Porte, therefore have here once at him. So they encountered, and Sir Launcelot bare him down horse and man, so that his shoulder went out of lith. Now befalleth it to me to joust, said Mordred, for Sir Mador hath a sore fall. Sir Launcelot was ware of him, and gat a great spear in his hand, and met him, and Sir Mordred brake a spear upon him, and Sir Launcelot gave him such a buffet that the arson of his saddle brake, and so he flew over his horse's tail, that his helm butted into the earth a foot and more, that nigh his neck was broken, and there he lay long in a swoon. Then came in Sir Gahalantine with a great spear and Launcelot against him, with all their strength

that they might drive, that both their spears to-brast even to their hands, and then they ſlang out with their swords and gave many a grim stroke. Then was Sir Launcelot wroth out of measure, and then he smote Sir Galahantine on the helm that his nose brast out on blood, and ears and mouth both, and therewith his head hung low. And therewith his horse ran away with him, and he fell down to the earth. Anon therewithal Sir Launcelot gat a great spear in his hand, and or ever that great spear brake, he bare down to the earth sixteen knights, some horse and man, and some the man and not the horse, and there was none but that he hit surely, he bare none arms that day. And then he gat another great spear, and smote down twelve knights, and the most part of them never throve after. And then the knights of the King of Northgalis would joust no more. And there the gree was given to King Bagdemagus. So either party departed unto his own place, and Sir Launcelot rode forth with King Bagdemagus unto his castle, and there he had passing good cheer both with the king and with his daughter, and they proffered him great gifts. And on the morn he took his leave, and told the king that he would go and seek his brother Sir Lionel, that went from him when that he slept, so he took his horse, and betaught them all to God. And there he said unto the king's daughter, If ye have need any time of my service I pray you let me have knowledge, and I shall not fail you as I am true knight. And so Sir Launcelot

Bagdemagus victorious

Launcelot meets a damosel

departed, and by adventure he came into the same forest where he was taken sleeping. And in the midst of a highway he met a damosel riding on a white palfrey, and there either saluted other. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, know ye in this country any adventures? Sir knight, said that damosel, here are adventures near hand, an thou durst prove them. Why should I not prove adventures? said Sir Launcelot, for that cause come I hither. Well, said she, thou seemest well to be a good knight, and if thou dare meet with a good knight, I shall bring thee where is the best knight, and the mightiest that ever thou found, so thou wilt tell me what is thy name, and what knight thou art. Damosel, as for to tell thee my name I take no great force, truly my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Sir, thou beseemest well, here be adventures by that fall for thee, for hereby dwelleth a knight that will not be overmatched for no man I know but ye overmatch him, and his name is Sir Turquine. And, as I understand, he hath in his prison, of Arthur's court, good knights three score and four, that he hath won with his own hands. But when ye have done that journey ye shall promise me as ye are a true knight for to go with me, and to help me and other damosels that are distressed daily with a false knight. All your intent, damosel, and desire I will fulfil, so ye will bring me unto this knight. Now, fair knight, come on your way; and so she brought him unto the ford and the tree where hung the basin. So Sir Launcelot

let his horse drink, and then he beat on the basin with the butt of his spear so hard with all his might till the bottom fell out, and long he did so but he saw nothing. Then he rode endlong the gates of that manor nigh half-an-hour. And then was he ware of a great knight that drove an horse afore him, and overthwart the horse there lay an armed knight bound. And ever as they came near and near, Sir Launcelot thought he should know him. Then Sir Launcelot was ware that it was Sir Gaheris, Gawaine's brother, a knight of the Table Round. Now, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, I see yonder cometh a knight fast bounden that is a fellow of mine, and brother he is unto Sir Gawaine. And at the first beginning I promise you, by the love of God, to rescue that knight; but if his master sit better in the saddle I shall deliver all the prisoners that he hath out of danger, for I am sure he hath two brethren of mine prisoners with him. By that time that either had seen other, they gripped their spears unto them. Now, fair knight, said Sir Launcelot, put that wounded knight off the horse, and let him rest awhile, and let us two prove our strengths; for as it is informed me, thou doest and hast done great despite and shame unto knights of the Round Table, and therefore now defend thee. An thou be of the Table Round, said Turquine, I defy thee and all thy fellowship. That is overmuch said, said Sir Launcelot.

who takes him to Turquine

They fight together

CHAPTER VIII. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Turquine fought together. And then they put their spears in the rests, and came together with their horses as fast as they might run, and either smote other in middes of their shields, that both their horses' backs brast under them, and the knights were both stonied, and as soon as they might avoid their horses, they took their shields afore them, and drew out their swords, and came together eagerly, and either gave other many strong strokes, for there might neither shields nor harness hold their strokes. And so within a while they had both grimly wounds, and bled passing grievously. Thus they fared two hours or more trasing and rasing either other where they might hit any bare place. Then at the last they were breathless both, and stood leaning on their swords. Now fellow, said Sir Turquine, hold thy hand a while, and tell me what I shall ask thee. Say on. Then Turquine said, Thou art the biggest man that ever I met withal, and the best breathed, and like one knight that I hate above all other knights; so be it that thou be not he I will lightly accord with thee, and for thy love I will deliver all the prisoners that I have, that is three score and four, so thou wilt tell me thy name. And thou and I we will be fellows together, and never to fail the while that I live. It is well said, said Sir Launcelot, but sithen it is so that I may have thy friendship, what knight is he that thou so hatest above all other? Faithfully, said Sir Turquine, his name is Sir Launcelot

du Lake, for he slew my brother, Sir Carados, at the dolorous tower, that was one of the best knights alive; and therefore him I except of all knights, for may I once meet with him, the one of us shall make an end of other, I make mine avow. And for Sir Launcelot's sake I have slain an hundred good knights, and as many I have maimed all utterly that they might never after help themselves, and many have died in prison, and yet have I three score and four, and all shall be delivered so thou wilt tell me thy name, so be it that thou be not Sir Launcelot. Now, see I well, said Sir Launcelot, that such a man I might be, I might have peace, and such a man I might be, that there should be war mortal betwixt us. And now, sir knight, at thy request I will that thou wit and know that I am Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son of Benwick, and very knight of the Table Round. And now I defy thee, and do thy best. Ah, said Turquine, Launcelot, thou art unto me most welcome that ever was knight, for we shall never depart till the one of us be dead. Then they hurtled together as two wild bulls rashing and lashing with their shields and swords, that sometime they fell both over their noses. Thus they fought still two hours and more, and never would have rest, and Sir Turquine gave Sir Launcelot many wounds that all the ground thereas they fought was all bespeckled with blood.

Launcelot defies Turquine

and slays him

CHAPTER IX. How Sir Turquine was slain, and how Sir Launcelot bade Sir Gaheris deliver all the prisoners. Then at the last Sir Turquine waxed faint, and gave somewhat aback, and bare his shield low for weariness. That espied Sir Launcelot, and leapt upon him fiercely and gat him by the beaver of his helmet, and plucked him down on his knees, and anon he rased off his helm, and smote his neck in sunder. And when Sir Launcelot had done this, he yode unto the damosel and said, Damosel, I am ready to go with you where ye will have me, but I have no horse. Fair Sir, said she, take this wounded knight's horse and send him into this manor, and command him to deliver all the prisoners. So Sir Launcelot went unto Gaheris, and prayed him not to be aggrieved for to lend him his horse. Nay, fair lord, said Gaheris, I will that ye take my horse at your own commandment, for ye have both saved me and my horse, and this day I say ye are the best knight in the world, for ye have slain this day in my sight the mightiest man and the best knight except you that ever I saw, and, fair sir, said Gaheris, I pray you tell me your name. Sir, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, that ought to help you of right for King Arthur's sake, and in especial for my lord Sir Gawaine's sake, your own dear brother; and when that ye come within yonder manor, I am sure ye shall find there many knights of the Round Table, for I have seen many of their shields that I know on yonder tree. There is Kay's shield, and Sir Brandel's shield,

Turquine's prisoners released

and Sir Marhaus' shield, and Sir Galind's shield, and Sir Brian de Listnois' shield, and Sir Aliduke's shield, with many more that I am not now advised of, and also my two brethren's shields, Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Lionel; wherefore I pray you greet them all from me, and say that I bid them take such stuff there as they find, and that in any wise my brethren go unto the court and abide me there till that I come, for by the feast of Pentecost I cast me to be there, for as at this time I must ride with this damosel for to save my promise. And so he departed from Gaheris, and Gaheris yede in to the manor, and there he found a yeoman porter keeping there many keys. Anon withal Sir Gaheris threw the porter unto the ground and took the keys from him, and hastily he opened the prison door, and there he let out all the prisoners, and every man loosed other of their bonds. And when they saw Sir Gaheris, all they thanked him, for they weened that he was wounded. Not so, said Gaheris, it was Launcelot that slew him worshipfully with his own hands. I saw it with mine own eyes. And he greeteth you all well, and prayeth you to haste you to the court; and as unto Sir Lionel and Ector de Maris he prayeth you to abide him at the court. That shall we not do, says his brethren, we will find him an we may live. So shall I, said Sir Kay, find him or I come at the court as I am true knight. Then all those knights sought the house there-as the armour was, and then they armed them, and every knight found his own horse, and

Launcelot rides on

all that ever longed unto him. And when this was done, there came a forester with four horses laden with fat venison. Anon, Sir Kay said, Here is good meat for us for one meal, for we had not many a day no good repast. And so that venison was roasted, baken, and sodden, and so after supper some abode there all night, but Sir Lionel and Ector de Maris and Sir Kay rode after Sir Launcelot for to find him if they might.

CHAPTER X. How Sir Launcelot rode with a damosel and slew a knight that distressed all ladies and also a villain that kept a bridge. Now turn we unto Sir Launcelot, that rode with the damosel in a fair highway. Sir, said the damosel, here by this way haunteth a knight that distressed all ladies and gentlewomen, and at the least he robbeth them or lieth by them. What, said Sir Launcelot, is he a thief and a knight and a ravisher of women? he doth shame unto the order of knighthood, and contrary unto his oath; it is pity that he liveth. But, fair damosel, ye shall ride on afore, yourself, and I will keep myself in covert, and if that he trouble you or distress you I shall be your rescue and learn him to be ruled as a knight. So the maid rode on by the way a soft ambling pace. And within a while came out that knight on horseback out of the wood, and his page with him, and there he put the damosel from her horse, and then she cried. With that came Launcelot as fast as he might till he came

to that knight, saying, O thou false knight and traitor unto knighthood, who did learn thee to distress ladies and gentlewomen? When the knight saw Sir Launcelot thus rebuking him he answered not, but drew his sword and rode unto Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot threw his spear from him, and drew out his sword, and struck him such a buffet on the helmet that he clave his head and neck unto the throat. Now hast thou thy payment that long thou hast deserved, that is truth, said the damosel. For like as Sir Turquine watched to destroy knights, so did this knight attend to destroy and distress ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen, and his name was Sir Peris de Forest Savage. Now, damosel, said Sir Launcelot, will ye any more service of me? Nay, sir, she said, at this time, but almighty Jesu preserve you wheresomever ye ride or go, for the curteist knight thou art, and meekest, unto all ladies and gentlewomen that now liveth. But one thing, sir knight, methinketh ye lack, ye that are a knight wifeless, that ye will not love some maiden or gentlewoman, for I could never hear say that ever ye loved any of no manner degree, and that is great pity; but it is noised that ye love Queen Guenever, and that she hath ordained by enchantment that ye shall never love none other but her, nor none other damosel nor lady shall rejoice you; wherefore many in this land of high estate and low make great sorrow. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, I may not warn people to speak of me what it pleaseth them; but for to be a wedded man, I think it not; for then I must

He slays a knight

He slays the churl at the bridge

couch with her, and leave arms and tournaments, battles, and adventures; and as for to say for to take my pleasaunce with paramours, that will I refuse in principle for dread of God; for knights that be adventurous or lecherous shall not be happy nor fortunate unto the wars, for either they shall be overcome with a simpler knight than they be themselves, other else they shall by unhap and their cursedness slay better men than they be themselves. And so who that useth paramours shall be unhappy, and all thing is unhappy that is about them. And so Sir Launcelot and she departed. And then he rode in a deep forest two days and more, and had strait lodging. So on the third day he rode over a long bridge, and there stert upon him suddenly a passing foul churl, and he smote his horse on the nose that he turned about, and asked him why he rode over that bridge without his licence. Why should I not ride this way? said Sir Launcelot, I may not ride beside. Thou shalt not choose, said the churl, and lashed at him with a great club shod with iron. Then Sir Launcelot drew his sword and put the stroke aback, and clave his head unto the paps. At the end of the bridge was a fair village, and all the people, men and women, cried on Sir Launcelot, and said, A worse deed didst thou never for thyself, for thou hast slain the chief porter of our castle. Sir Launcelot let them say what they would, and straight he went into the castle; and when he came into the castle he alit, and tied his horse to a ring on the wall

and there he saw a fair green court, and thither he dressed him, for there him thought was a fair place to fight in. So he looked about, and saw much people in doors and windows that said, Fair knight, thou art unhappy.

He slays two giants

CHAPTER XI. How Sir Launcelot slew two giants, and made a castle free. Anon withal came there upon him two great giants, well armed all save the heads, with two horrible clubs in their hands. Sir Launcelot put his shield afore him and put the stroke away of the one giant, and with his sword he clave his head asunder. When his fellow saw that he ran away as he were wood, for fear of the horrible strokes, and Launcelot after him with all his might, and smote him on the shoulder, and clave him to the navel. Then Sir Launcelot went into the hall, and there came afore him three score ladies and damosels, and all kneeled unto him, and thanked God and him of their deliverance; For sir, said they, the most party of us have been here this seven year their prisoners, and we have worked all manner of silk works for our meat, and we are all great gentlewomen born, and blessed be the time, knight, that ever thou be born; for thou hast done the most worship that ever did knight in this world, that will we bear record, and we all pray you to tell us your name, that we may tell our friends who delivered us out of prison. Fair damosel, he said, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Ah, sir, said they all, well mayest thou be he, for else save yourself, as we deemed, there might never

and frees the castle of Tintagil

knight have the better of these two giants; for many fair knights have assayed it, and here have ended, and many times have we wished after you, and these two giants dread never knight but you. Now may ye say, said Sir Launcelot, unto your friends how and who hath delivered you, and greet them all from me, and if that I come in any of your marches, show me such cheer as ye have cause, and what treasure that there in this castle is I give it you for a reward for your grievance. And the lord that is owner of this castle I would he received it as is right. Fair sir, said they, the name of this castle is Tintagil, and a duke ought it sometime that had wedded fair Igraine, and after wedded her Uther Pendragon, and gat on her Arthur. Well, said Sir Launcelot, I understand to whom this castle longeth; and so he departed from them, and betaught them unto God. And then he mounted upon his horse, and rode into many strange and wild countries, and through many waters and valleys, and evil was he lodged. And at the last by fortune him happened, against a night to come to a fair courtelage, and therein he found an old gentlewoman that lodged him with good will, and there he had good cheer for him and his horse. And when time was, his host brought him into a fair garret, over the gate, to his bed. There Sir Launcelot unarmed him, and set his harness by him, and went to bed, and anon he fell a-sleep. So, soon after, there came one on horseback, and knocked at the gate in great haste, and when Sir Launcelot

heard this, he arose up and looked out at the window, and saw by the moonlight three knights came riding after that one man, and all three lashed on him at once with swords, and that one knight turned on them knightly again, and defended him. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, yonder one knight shall I help, for it were shame for me to see three knights on one. And if he be slain I am partner of his death, and therewith he took his harness, and went out at a window by a sheet down to the four knights, and then Sir Launcelot said on high, Turn you knights unto me, and leave your fighting with that knight. And then they all three left Sir Kay, and turned unto Sir Launcelot, and there began great battle, for they alit all three, and struck many great strokes at Sir Launcelot, and assailed him on every side. Then Sir Kay dressed him for to have holpen Sir Launcelot. Nay, sir, said he, I will none of your help; therefore as ye will have my help, let me alone with them. Sir Kay, for the pleasure of the knight, suffered him for to do his will, and so stood a-side. And then anon within six strokes, Sir Launcelot had stricken them to the earth. And then they all three cried: Sir knight, we yield us unto you as a man of might, makeless. As to that, said Sir Launcelot, I will not take your yielding unto me. But so that ye will yield you unto Sir Kay the Seneschal, on that covenant I will save your lives, and else not. Fair knight, said they, that were we loath to do; for as for Sir Kay, we chased him hither, and had

He fights with three knights

and overpowers them

overcome him had not ye been, therefore to yield us unto him it were no reason. Well, as to that, said Launcelot, advise you well, for ye may choose whether ye will die or live, for an ye be yolden it shall be unto Sir Kay. Fair knight, then they said, in saving of our lives we will do as thou commandest us. Then shall ye, said Sir Launcelot, on Whitsunday next coming, go unto the court of King Arthur, and there shall ye yield you unto Queen Guenever, and put you all three in her grace and mercy, and say that Sir Kay sent you thither to be her prisoners. Sir, they said, it shall be done by the faith of our bodies, an we be living, and there they swore every knight upon his sword. And so Sir Launcelot suffered them so to depart. And then Sir Launcelot knocked at the gate with the pommel of his sword, and with that came his host, and in they entered Sir Kay and he. Sir, said his host, I weened ye had been in your bed. So I was, said Sir Launcelot, but I rose and leapt out at my window for to help an old fellow of mine. And so when they came nigh the light, Sir Kay knew well that it was Sir Launcelot, and therewith he kneeled down and thanked him of all his kindness that he had holpen him twice from the death. Sir, he said, I have nothing done but that me ought for to do, and ye are welcome, and here shall ye repose you and take your rest. So when Sir Kay was unarmed, he asked after meat; so there was meat fetched him, and he ate strongly. And when he had supped they went to their

beds and were lodged together in one bed. On the morn Sir Launcelot arose early, and left Sir Kay sleeping, and Sir Launcelot took Sir Kay's armour and his shield, and armed him, and so he went to the stable, and took his horse, and took his leave of his host, and so he departed. Then soon after arose Sir Kay and missed Sir Launcelot. And then he espied that he had his armour and his horse. Now by my faith I know well that he will grieve some of the court of King Arthur; for on him knights will be bold, and deem that it is I, and that will beguile them. And because of his armour and shield I am sure I shall ride in peace. And then soon after departed Sir Kay and thanked his host.

Launcelot puts on Kay's armour

CHAPTER XII. How Sir Launcelot rode disguised in Sir Kay's harness, and how he smote down a knight. Now turn we unto Sir Launcelot that had ridden long in a great forest, and at the last he came into a low country, full of fair rivers and meadows. And afore him he saw a long bridge, and three pavilions stood thereon, of silk and sendal of divers hue. And without the pavilions hung three white shields on truncheons of spears, and great long spears stood upright by the pavilions, and at every pavilion's door stood three fresh squires, and so Sir Launcelot passed by them and spake no word. When he was passed the three knights saiden them that it was the proud Kay; He weeneth no knight so good as he, and the contrary is ofttime proved. By my faith, said one

He smites down three knights

of the knights, his name was Sir Gaunter, I will ride after him and assay him for all his pride, and ye may behold how that I speed. So this knight, Sir Gaunter, armed him, and hung his shield upon his shoulder, and mounted upon a great horse, and gat his spear in his hand, and walloped after Sir Launcelot. And when he came nigh him, he cried, Abide, thou proud knight Sir Kay, for thou shalt not pass quit. So Sir Launcelot turned him, and either feutred their spears, and came together with all their mights, and Sir Gaunter's spear brake, but Sir Launcelot smote him down horse and man. And when Sir Gaunter was at the earth his brethren said each one to other, Yonder knight is not Sir Kay, for he is bigger than he. I dare lay my head, said Sir Gilmere, yonder knight hath slain Sir Kay and hath taken his horse and his harness. Whether it be so or no, said Sir Raynold, the third brother, let us now go mount upon our horses and rescue our brother Sir Gaunter, upon pain of death. We all shall have work enough to match that knight, for ever meseemeth by his person it is Sir Launcelot, or Sir Tristram, or Sir Pelleas, the good knight. Then anon they took their horses and overtook Sir Launcelot, and Sir Gilmere put forth his spear, and ran to Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot smote him down that he lay in a swoon. Sir knight, said Sir Raynold, thou art a strong man, and as I suppose thou hast slain my two brethren, for the which raseth my heart sore against thee, and if I might with my worship I would not have ado with you, but needs I must take part

as they do, and therefore, knight, he said, keep thyself. And so they hurtled together with all their mights, and all to-shivered both their spears. And then they drew their swords and lashed together eagerly. Anon therewith arose Sir Gaunter, and came unto his brother Sir Gilmere, and bade him, Arise, and help we our brother Sir Raynold, that yonder marvellously matched yonder good knight. Therewithal, they leapt on their horses and hurtled unto Sir Launcelot. And when he saw them come he smote a sore stroke unto Sir Raynold, that he fell off his horse to the ground, and then he struck to the other two brethren, and at two strokes he struck them down to the earth. With that Sir Raynold began to start up with his head all bloody, and came straight unto Sir Launcelot. Now let be, said Sir Launcelot, I was not far from thee when thou wert made knight, Sir Raynold, and also I know thou art a good knight, and loath I were to slay thee. Gramercy, said Sir Raynold, as for your goodness; and I dare say as for me and my brethren, we will not be loath to yield us unto you, with that we knew your name, for well we know ye are not Sir Kay. As for that be it as it be may, for ye shall yield you unto dame Guenever, and look that ye be with her on Whitsunday, and yield you unto her as prisoners, and say that Sir Kay sent you unto her. Then they swore it should be done, and so passed forth Sir Launcelot, and each one of the brethren holp other as well as they might.

who yield to him

Launcelot jousts with four knights

CHAPTER XIII How Sir Launcelot jousted against four knights of the Round Table and overthrew them. So Sir Launcelot rode into a deep forest, and thereby in a slade, he saw four knights hoving under an oak, and they were of Arthur's court, one was Sir Sagramour le Desirous, and Ector de Maris, and Sir Gawaine, and Sir Uwaine. Anon as these four knights had espied Sir Launcelot, they weened by his arms it had been Sir Kay. Now by my faith, said Sir Sagramour, I will prove Sir Kay's might, and gat his spear in his hand, and came toward Sir Launcelot. Therewith Sir Launcelot was ware and knew him well, and feutred his spear against him, and smote Sir Sagramour so sore that horse and man fell both to the earth. Lo, my fellows, said he, yonder ye may see what a buffet he hath; that knight is much bigger than ever was Sir Kay. Now shall ye see what I may do to him. So Sir Ector gat his spear in his hand and walloped toward Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot smote him through the shield and shoulder, that man and horse went to the earth, and ever his spear held. By my faith, said Sir Uwaine, yonder is a strong knight, and I am sure he hath slain Sir Kay; and I see by his great strength it will be hard to match him. And therewithal, Sir Uwaine gat his spear in his hand and rode toward Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot knew him well, and so he met him on the plain, and gave him such a buffet that he was astonied, that long he wist not where he was. Now see I well, said Sir

Gawaine, I must encounter with that knight. Then he dressed his shield and gat a good spear in his hand, and Sir Launcelot knew him well; and then they let run their horses with all their mights, and either knight smote other in middes of the shield. But Sir Gawaine's spear to-brast, and Sir Launcelot charged so sore upon him that his horse reversed up-so-down. And much sorrow had Sir Gawaine to avoid his horse, and so Sir Launcelot passed on a pace and smiled, and said, God give him joy that this spear made, for there came never a better in my hand. Then the four knights went each one to other and comforted each other. What say ye by this guest? said Sir Gawaine, that one spear hath felled us all four. We commend him unto the devil, they said all, for he is a man of great might. Ye may well say it, said Sir Gawaine, that he is a man of might, for I dare lay my head it is Sir Launcelot, I know it by his riding. Let him go, said Sir Gawaine, for when we come to the court then shall we wit; and then had they much sorrow to get their horses again.

and overcomes them all

CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Launcelot followed a brachet into a castle, where he found a dead knight, and how he after was required of a damosel to heal her brother.

Now leave we there and speak of Sir Launcelot that rode a great while in a deep forest, where he saw a black brachet, seeking in manner as it had been in the feute of an hurt deer. And therewith he rode after the brachet, and he saw

He follows a brachet and finds a dead knight

lie on the ground a large feute of blood. And then Sir Launcelot rode after. And ever the brachet looked behind her, and so she went through a great marsh, and ever Sir Launcelot followed. And then was he ware of an old manor, and thither ran the brachet, and so over the bridge. So Sir Launcelot rode over that bridge that was old and feeble; and when he came in middes of a great hall, there he saw lie a dead knight that was a seemly man, and that brachet licked his wounds. And therewithal came out a lady weeping and wringing her hands; and then she said, O knight, too much sorrow hast thou brought me. Why say ye so? said Sir Launcelot, I did never this knight no harm, for hither by feute of blood this brachet brought me; and therefore, fair lady, be not displeased with me, for I am full sore aggrieved of your grievance. Truly, sir, she said, I trow it be not ye that hath slain my husband, for he that did that deed is sore wounded, and he is never likely to recover; that shall I ensure him. What was your husband's name? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said she, his name was called Sir Gilbert the Bastard, one of the best knights of the world, and he that hath slain him I know not his name. Now God send you better comfort, said Sir Launcelot; and so he departed and went into the forest again, and there he met with a damosel, the which knew him well, and she said a-loud, Well be ye found, my lord; and now I require thee, on thy knighthood, help my brother that is sore wounded, and

never stinteth bleeding; for this day he fought with Sir Gilbert the Bastard and slew him in plain battle, and there was my brother sore wounded, and there is a lady a sorceress that dwelleth in a castle here beside, and this day she told me my brother's wounds should never be whole till I could find a knight that would go into the Chapel Perilous, and there he should find a sword and a bloody cloth that the wounded knight was lapped in, and a piece of that cloth and sword should heal my brother's wounds, so that his wounds were searched with the sword and the cloth. This is a marvellous thing, said Sir Launcelot, but what is your brother's name? Sir, she said, his name was Sir Meliot de Logres. That me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot, for he is a fellow of the Table Round, and to his help I will do my power. Then, sir, said she, follow even this highway, and it will bring you unto the Chapel Perilous; and here I shall abide till God send you here again, and, but you speed, I know no knight living that may achieve that adventure.

The adventure of the Chapel Perilous

CHAPTER XV. How Sir Launcelot came into the Chapel Perilous and gat there of a dead corpse a piece of the cloth and a sword. Right so Sir Launcelot departed, and when he came unto the Chapel Perilous he alit down, and tied his horse unto a little gate. And as soon as he was within the churchyard he saw on the front of the chapel many fair rich shields turned up-so-down, and many of the shields Sir Launcelot had seen knights bear

He seizes the cloth and the sword

beforehand. With that he saw by him there stand thirty great knights, more by a yard than any man that ever he had seen, and all those grinned and gnashed at Sir Launcelot. And when he saw their countenance he dread him sore, and so put his shield afore him, and took his sword ready in his hand ready unto battle, and they were all armed in black harness ready with their shields and their swords drawn. And when Sir Launcelot would have gone throughout them, they scattered on every side of him, and gave him the way, and therewith he waxed all bold, and entered into the chapel, and then he saw no light but a dim lamp burning, and then was he ware of a corpse hilled with a cloth of silk. Then Sir Launcelot stooped down, and cut a piece away of that cloth, and then it fared under him as the earth had quaked a little; therewithal he feared. And then he saw a fair sword lie by the dead knight, and that he gat in his hand and hied him out of the chapel. Anon as ever he was in the chapel yard all the knights spake to him with a grimly voice, and said, Knight Sir Launcelot, lay that sword from thee or else thou shalt die. Whether that I live or die, said Sir Launcelot, with no great word get ye it again, therefore fight for it an ye list. Then right so he passed throughout them, and beyond the chapel yard there met him a fair damosel, and said, Sir Launcelot, leave that sword behind thee, or thou wilt die for it. I leave it not, said Sir Launcelot, for no entreaties. No, said she, an thou didst leave

The temptations of Castle Perilous

that sword, Queen Guenever should thou never see. Then were I a fool an I would leave this sword, said Launcelot. Now, gentle knight, said the damosel, I require thee to kiss me but once. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, that God me forbid. Well, sir, said she, an thou hadst kissed me thy life days had been done, but now, alas, she said, I have lost all my labour, for I ordained this chapel for thy sake, and for Sir Gawaine. And once I had Sir Gawaine within me, and at that time he fought with that knight that lieth there dead in yonder chapel, Sir Gilbert the Bastard; and at that time he smote the left hand off of Sir Gilbert the Bastard. And, Sir Launcelot, now I tell thee, I have loved thee this seven year, but there may no woman have thy love but Queen Guenever. But sithen I may not rejoice thee to have thy body a-live, I had kept no more joy in this world but to have thy body dead. Then would I have balmed it and served it, and so have kept it my life days, and daily I should have clipped thee, and kissed thee, in despite of Queen Guenever. Ye say well, said Sir Launcelot, Jesu preserve me from your subtle crafts. And therewithal he took his horse and so departed from her. And as the book saith, when Sir Launcelot was departed she took such sorrow that she died within a fourteen night, and her name was Hellawes the sorceress, Lady of the Castle Nigramous. Anon Sir Launcelot met with the damosel, Sir Meliot's sister. And when she saw him she clapped her hands, and wept

He heals the wounded knight

for joy. And then they rode unto a castle thereby where lay Sir Meliot. And anon as Sir Launcelot saw him he knew him, but he was passing pale as the earth for bleeding. When Sir Meliot saw Sir Launcelot he kneeled upon his knees and cried on high: O lord Sir Launcelot, help me! Anon Sir Launcelot leapt unto him and touched his wounds with Sir Gilbert's sword. And then he wiped his wounds with a part of the bloody cloth that Sir Gilbert was wrapped in, and anon an wholer man in his life was he never. And then there was great joy between them, and they made Sir Launcelot all the cheer that they might, and so on the morn Sir Launcelot took his leave, and bade Sir Meliot hie him to the court of my lord Arthur, for it draweth nigh to the Feast of Pentecost, and there by the grace of God ye shall find me. And therewith they departed.

CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Launcelot at the request of a lady recovered a falcon, by which he was deceived. And so Sir Launcelot rode through many strange countries, over marshes and valleys, till by fortune he came to a fair castle, and as he passed beyond the castle him thought he heard two bells ring. And then was he ware of a falcon came flying over his head toward an high elm, and long lines about her feet, and as she flew unto the elm to take her perch the lines over-cast about a bough And when she would have taken her flight she hung by the legs fast; and Sir Launcelot saw

He recovers a falcon

how she hung, and beheld the fair falcon perigot, and he was sorry for her. The meanwhile came a lady out of the castle and cried on high: O Launcelot, Launcelot, as thou art flower of all knights, help me to get my hawk, for an my hawk be lost my lord will destroy me; for I kept the hawk and she slipped from me, and if my lord my husband wit it he is so hasty that he will slay me. What is your lord's name? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, she said, his name is Sir Phelot, a knight that longeth unto the King of Northgalis. Well, fair lady, sine that ye know my name, and require me of knighthood to help you, I will do what I may to get your hawk, and yet God knoweth I am an ill climber, and the tree is passing high, and few boughs to help me withal. And therewith Sir Launcelot alit, and tied his horse to the same tree, and prayed the lady to unarm him. And so when he was unarmed, he put off all his clothes unto his shirt and breech, and with might and force he clomb up to the falcon, and tied the lines to a great rotten boyshe, and threw the hawk down and it withal. Anon the lady gat the hawk in her hand; and therewithal came out Sir Phelot out of the groves suddenly, that was her husband, all armed and with his naked sword in his hand, and said: O knight Launcelot, now have I found thee as I would, and stood at the bole of the tree to slay him. Ah, lady, said Sir Launcelot, why have ye betrayed me? She hath done, said Sir Phelot, but as I commanded her, and therefore there nis none other boot but

by which he is betrayed

thine hour is come that thou must die. That were shame unto thee, said Sir Launcelot, thou an armed knight to slay a naked man by treason. Thou gettest none other grace, said Sir Phelot, and therefore help thyself an thou canst. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be thy shame, but sine thou wilt do none other, take mine harness with thee, and hang my sword upon a bough that I may get it, and then do thy best to slay me an thou canst. Nay, nay, said Sir Phelot, for I know thee better than thou weenest, therefore thou gettest no weapon an I may keep you therefrom. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, that ever a knight should die weaponless. And therewith he waited above him and under him, and over his head he saw a rownsepyk, a big bough leafless, and therewith he brake it off by the body. And then he came lower and awaited how his own horse stood, and suddenly he leapt on the further side of the horse, froward the knight. And then Sir Phelot lashed at him eagerly, weening to have slain him. But Sir Launcelot put away the stroke with the rownsepyk, and therewith he smote him on the one side of the head, that he fell down in a swoon to the ground. So then Sir Launcelot took his sword out of his hand, and struck his neck from the body. Then cried the lady, Alas! why hast thou slain my husband? I am not causer, said Sir Launcelot, for with falsehood ye would have had slain me with treason, and now it is fallen on you both. And then she swooned as though she would die. And therewithal Sir Launcelot gat all his armour as

well as he might, and put it upon him for dread of more resort, for he dread that the knight's castle was so nigh. And so as soon as he might he took his horse and departed, and thanked God that he had escaped that adventure.

but slays the knight

CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Launcelot overtook a knight which chased his wife to have slain her, and how he said to him.

So Sir Launcelot rode many wild ways, throughout marches and many wild ways. And as he rode in a valley he saw a knight chasing a lady, with a naked sword, to have slain her. And by fortune as this knight should have slain this lady, she cried on Sir Launcelot and prayed him to rescue her. When Sir Launcelot saw that mischief, he took his horse and rode between them, saying, Knight, fie for shame, why wilt thou slay this lady? thou dost shame unto thee and all knights. What hast thou to do betwixt me and my wife? said the knight. I will slay her maugre thy head. That shall ye not, said Sir Launcelot, for rather we two will have ado together. Sir Launcelot, said the knight, thou dost not thy part, for this lady hath betrayed me. It is not so, said the lady, truly he saith wrong on me. And for because I love and cherish my cousin germain, he is jealous betwixt him and me; and as I shall answer to God there was never sin betwixt us. But, sir, said the lady, as thou art called the worshipfullest knight of the world, I require

The knight and his lady

thee of true knighthood, keep me and save me. For whatsomever ye say he will slay me, for he is without mercy. Have ye no doubt, said Launcelot, it shall not lie in his power. Sir, said the knight, in your sight I will be ruled as ye will have me. And so Sir Launcelot rode on the one side and she on the other: he had not ridden but a while, but the knight bade Sir Launcelot turn him and look behind him, and said, Sir, yonder come men of arms after us riding. And so Sir Launcelot turned him and thought no treason, and therewith was the knight and the lady on one side, and suddenly he swapped off his lady's head. And when Sir Launcelot had espied him what he had done, he said, and called him, Traitor, thou hast shamed me for ever. And suddenly Sir Launcelot alit off his horse, and pulled out his sword to slay him, and therewithal he fell flat to the earth, and gripped Sir Launcelot by the thighs, and cried mercy. Fie on thee, said Sir Launcelot, thou shameful knight, thou mayest have no mercy, and therefore arise and fight with me. Nay, said the knight, I will never arise till ye grant me mercy. Now will I proffer thee fair, said Launcelot, I will unarm me unto my shirt, and I will have nothing upon me but my shirt, and my sword in my hand. And if thou canst slay me, quit be thou for ever. Nay, sir, said Pedivere, that will I never. Well, said Sir Launcelot, take this lady and the head, and bear it upon thee, and here shalt thou swear upon my sword, to bear it always upon thy back, and never to rest till

thou come to Queen Guenever. Sir, said he, that will I do, by the faith of my body. Now, said Launcelot, tell me what is your name? Sir, my name is Pedivere. In a shameful hour wert thou born, said Launcelot. So Pedivere departed with the dead lady and the head, and found the queen with King Arthur at Winchester, and there he told all the truth. Sir knight, said the queen, this is an horrible deed and a shameful, and a great rebuke unto Sir Launcelot; but notwithstanding his worship is not known in many divers countries; but this shall I give you in penance, make ye as good shift as ye can, ye shall bear this lady with you on horseback unto the Pope of Rome, and of him receive your penance for your foul deeds; and ye shall never rest one night whereas ye do another, an ye go to any bed the dead body shall lie with you. This oath there he made, and so departed. And as it telleth in the French book, when he came to Rome, the Pope bade him go again unto Queen Guenever, and in Rome was his lady buried by the Pope's commandment. And after this Sir Pedivere fell to great goodness, and was an holy man and an hermit.

Launcelot returns to Court

CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Launcelot came to King Arthur's Court, and how there were recounted all his noble feats and acts. Now turn we unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, that came home two days afore the Feast of Pentecost; and the king and all the court were passing fain of his coming. And when Sir

Launcelot's deeds recounted

Gawaine, Sir Uwaine, Sir Sagramore, Sir Ector de Maris, saw Sir Launcelot in Kay's armour, then they wist well it was he that smote them down all with one spear. Then there was laughing and smiling among them. And ever now and now came all the knights home that Sir Turquine had prisoners, and they all honoured and worshipped Sir Launcelot. When Sir Gaheris heard them speak, he said, I saw all the battle from the beginning to the ending, and there he told King Arthur all how it was, and how Sir Turquine was the strongest knight that ever he saw except Sir Launcelot: there were many knights bare him record, nigh three score. Then Sir Kay told the king how Sir Launcelot had rescued him when he should have been slain, and how he made the knights yield them to me, and not to him. And there they were all three, and bare record. And by Jesu, said Sir Kay, because Sir Launcelot took my harness and left me his I rode in good peace, and no man would have ado with me. Anon therewithal there came the three knights that fought with Sir Launcelot at the long bridge. And there they yielded them unto Sir Kay, and Sir Kay forsook them and said he fought never with them. But I shall ease your heart, said Sir Kay, yonder is Sir Launcelot that overcame you. When they wist that they were glad. And then Sir Meliot de Logres came home, and told the king how Sir Launcelot had saved him from the death. And all his deeds were known, how four queens, sorceresses, had him

in prison, and how he was delivered by King Bagdemagus's daughter. Also there were told all the great deeds of arms that Sir Launcelot did betwixt the two kings, that is for to say the King of Northgalis and King Bagdemagus. All the truth Sir Gahalantine did tell, and Sir Mador de la Porte and Sir Mordred, for they were at that same tournament. Then came in the lady that knew Sir Launcelot when that he wounded Sir Belleus at the pavilion. And there, at request of Sir Launcelot, Sir Belleus was made knight of the Round Table. And so at that time Sir Launcelot had the greatest name of any knight of the world, and most he was honoured of high and low.

Launcelot the noblest knight

Explicit the noble tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake, which is the vi. book. Here followeth the tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that was called Beaumains by Sir Kay, and is the seventh book.

BOOK VII

The Feast of Pentecost

CHAPTER I. How Beaumains came to King Arthur's Court and demanded three petitions of King Arthur. When Arthur held his Round Table most plenour, it fortuned that he commanded that the high feast of Pentecost should be holden at a site and a castle, the which in those days was called Kynke Kenadonne, upon the sands that marched nigh Wales. So ever the king had a custom that at the feast of Pentecost in especial, afore other feasts in the year, he would not go that day to meat until he had heard or seen of a great marvel. And for that custom all manner of strange adventures came before Arthur as at that feast before all other feasts. And so Sir Gawaine, a little tofore noon of the day of Pentecost, espied at a window three men upon horseback, and a dwarf on foot, and so the three men alit, and the dwarf kept their horses, and one of the three men was higher than the other twain by a foot and an half. Then Sir Gawaine went unto the king and said, Sir, go to your meat, for here at the hand come strange adventures. So Arthur went unto his meat with many other kings. And there were all the knights of the Round Table only those that were prisoners or slain at a recounter. Then at the high feast evermore they should be fulfilled the whole number of

an hundred and fifty, for then was the Round Table fully complished. Right so came into the hall two men well beseen and richly, and upon their shoulders there leaned the goodliest young man and the fairest that ever they all saw, and he was large and long and broad in the shoulders, and well visaged, and the fairest and the largest handed that ever man saw, but he fared as though he might not go nor bear himself but if he leaned upon their shoulders. Anon as Arthur saw him there was made peace and room, and right so they yede with him unto the high dais, without saying of any words. Then this much young man pulled him aback, and easily stretched up straight, saying, King Arthur, God you bless and all your fair fellowship, and in especial the fellowship of the Table Round. And for this cause I am come hither, to pray you and require you to give me three gifts, and they shall not be unreasonably asked, but that ye may worshipfully and honourably grant them me, and to you no great hurt nor loss. And the first done and gift I will ask now, and the other two gifts I will ask this day twelvemonth, wheresomever ye hold your high feast. Now ask, said Arthur, and ye shall have your asking. Now, sir, this is my petition for this feast, that ye will give me meat and drink sufficiently for this twelvemonth, and at that day I will ask mine other two gifts. My fair son, said Arthur, ask better, I counsel thee, for this is but a simple asking; for my heart giveth me to thee greatly, that thou art come of men of worship, and greatly my con-

The unknown guest

His request

ceit faileth me but thou shalt prove a man of right great worship. Sir, he said, thereof be as it be may, I have asked that I will ask. Well, said the king, ye shall have meat and drink enough; I never defended that none, neither my friend nor my foe. But what is thy name I would wit? I cannot tell you, said he. That is marvel, said the king, that thou knowest not thy name, and thou art the goodliest young man one that ever I saw. Then the king betook him to Sir Kay the steward, and charged him that he should give him of all manner of meats and drinks of the best, and also that he had all manner of finding as though he were a lord's son. That shall little need, said Sir Kay, to do such cost upon him; for I dare undertake he is a villain born, and never will make man, for an he had come of gentlemen he would have asked of you horse and armour, but such as he is, so he asketh. And sithen he hath no name, I shall give him a name that shall be Beaumains, that is Fair-hands, and into the kitchen I shall bring him, and there he shall have fat brose every day, that he shall be as fat by the twelvemonths' end as a pork hog. Right so the two men departed and beleft him to Sir Kay, that scorned him and mocked him.

CHAPTER II. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine were wroth because Sir Kay mocked Beaumains, and of a damosel which desired a knight to fight for a lady.

Thereat was Sir Gawaine wroth, and in especial Sir Launcelot bade Sir Kay leave his mocking,

for I dare lay my head he shall prove a man of great worship. Let be, said Sir Kay, it may not be by no reason, for as he is, so he hath asked. Beware, said Sir Launcelot, so ye gave the good knight Brewnor, Sir Dinadan's brother, a name, and ye called him La Cote Male Taile, and that turned you to anger afterward. As for that, said Sir Kay, this shall never prove none such. For Sir Brewnor desired ever worship, and this desireth bread and drink and broth; upon pain of my life he was fostered up in some abbey, and, howsomeever it was, they failed meat and drink, and so hither he is come for his sustenance. And so Sir Kay bade get him a place, and sit down to meat; so Beaumains went to the hall door, and set him down among boys and lads, and there he ate sadly. And then Sir Launcelot after meat bade him come to his chamber, and there he should have meat and drink enough. And so did Sir Gawaine: but he refused them all; he would do none other but as Sir Kay commanded him, for no proffer. But as touching Sir Gawaine, he had reason to proffer him lodging, meat, and drink, for that proffer came of his blood, for he was nearer kin to him than he wist. But that as Sir Launcelot did was of his great gentleness and courtesy. So thus he was put into the kitchen, and lay nightly as the boys of the kitchen did. And so he endured all that twelvemonth, and never displeased man nor child, but always he was meek and mild. But ever when that he saw any jousting of knights, that would he see an he

Sir Kay names him Beaumains

A damosel prays for succour

might. And ever Sir Launcelot would give him gold to spend, and clothes, and so did Sir Gawaine, and where there were any masteries done, thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards. Then would Sir Kay say, How liketh you my boy of the kitchen? So it passed on till the feast of Whitsuntide. And at that time the king held it at Carlion in the most royallest wise that might be, like as he did yearly. But the king would no meat eat upon the Whitsunday, until he heard some adventures. Then came there a squire to the king and said, Sir, ye may go to your meat, for here cometh a damosel with some strange adventures. Then was the king glad and sat him down. Right so there came a damosel into the hall and saluted the king, and prayed him of succour. For whom? said the king, what is the adventure? Sir, she said, I have a lady of great worship and renown, and she is besieged with a tyrant, so that she may not out of her castle; and because here are called the noblest knights of the world, I come to you to pray you of succour. What hight your lady, and where dwelleth she, and who is she, and what is his name that hath besieged her? Sir King, she said, as for my lady's name that shall not ye know for me as at this time, but I let you wit she is a lady of great worship and of great lands; and as for the tyrant that besiegeth her and destroyeth her lands, he is called the Red Knight of the Red Laundes. I know him not, said the king. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, I know him

well, for he is one of the perilloust knights of the world; men say that he hath seven men's strength, and from him I escaped once full hard with my life. Fair damosel, said the king, there be knights here would do their power for to rescue your lady, but because you will not tell her name, nor where she dwelleth, therefore none of my knights that here be now shall go with you by my will. Then must I speak further, said the damosel.

Beaumains asks his two gifts

CHAPTER III. How Beaumains desired the battle, and how it was granted to him, and how he desired to be made knight of Sir Launcelot. With these words came before the king Beaumains, while the damosel was there, and thus he said, Sir king, God thank you I have been this twelvemonth in your kitchen, and have had my full sustenance, and now I will ask my two gifts that be behind. Ask, upon my peril, said the king. Sir, this shall be my two gifts, first that ye will grant me to have this adventure of the damosel, for it belongeth unto me. Thou shalt have it, said the king, I grant it thee. Then, sir, this is the other gift, that ye shall bid Launcelot du Lake to make me knight, for of him I will be made knight and else of none. And when I am passed I pray you let him ride after me, and make me knight when I require him. All this shall be done, said the king. Fie on thee, said the damosel, shall I have none but one that is your kitchen page? Then was she wroth, and took her horse and departed. And with

He gains Kay's spear and shield

that there came one to Beaumains and told him his horse and armour was come for him; and there was the dwarf come with all thing that him needed, in the richest manner; thereat all the court had much marvel from whence came all that gear. So when he was armed there was none but few so goodly a man as he was; and right so as he came into the hall and took his leave of King Arthur, and Sir Gawaine, and Sir Launcelot, and prayed that he would hie after him, and so departed and rode after the damosel.

CHAPTER IV. How Beaumains departed, and how he gat of Sir Kay a spear and a shield, and how he jousted with Sir Launcelot. But there went many after to behold how well he was horsed and trapped in cloth of gold, but he had neither shield nor spear. Then Sir Kay said all open in the hall, I will ride after my boy in the kitchen, to wit whether he will know me for his better. Said Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine, Yet abide at home. So Sir Kay made him ready and took his horse and his spear, and rode after him. And right as Beaumains overtook the damosel, right so came Sir Kay and said, Beaumains, what, sir, know ye not me? Then he turned his horse, and knew it was Sir Kay, that had done him all the despite as ye have heard afore. Yea, said Beaumains, I know you for an ungentle knight of the court, and therefore beware of me. Therewith Sir Kay put his spear in the rest, and ran straight upon him;

He jousts with Launcelot

and Beaumains came as fast upon him with his sword in his hand, and so he put away his spear with his sword, and with a foin thrust him through the side, that Sir Kay fell down as he had been dead; and he alit down and took Sir Kay's shield and his spear, and stert upon his own horse and rode his way. All that saw Sir Launcelot, and so did the damosel. And then he bade his dwarf stert upon Sir Kay's horse, and so he did. By that Sir Launcelot was come, then he proffered Sir Launcelot to joust; and either made them ready, and they came together so fiercely that either bare down other to the earth, and sore were they bruised Then Sir Launcelot arose and helped him from his horse. And then Beaumains threw his shield from him, and proffered to fight with Sir Launcelot on foot; and so they rushed together like boars, tracing, rasing, and foining to the mountenance of an hour; and Sir Launcelot felt him so big that he marvelled of his strength, for he fought more liker a giant than a knight, and that his fighting was durable and passing perilous. For Sir Launcelot had so much ado with him that he dread himself to be shamed, and said, Beaumains, fight not so sore, your quarrel and mine is not so great but we may leave off. Truly that is truth, said Beaumains, but it doth me good to feel your might, and yet, my lord, I showed not the utterance.

Launcelot knights Beaumains

CHAPTER V. How Beaumains told to Sir Launcelot his name, and how he was dubbed knight of Sir Launcelot, and after overtook the damosel. In God's name, said Sir Launcelot, for I promise you, by the faith of my body, I had as much to do as I might to save myself from you unshamed, and therefore have ye no doubt of none earthly knight. Hope ye so that I may any while stand a proved knight? said Beaumains. Yea, said Launcelot, do as ye have done, and I shall be your warrant. Then, I pray you, said Beaumains, give me the order of knighthood. Then must ye tell me your name, said Launcelot, and of what kin ye be born. Sir, so that ye will not discover me I shall, said Beaumains. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, and that I promise you by the faith of my body until it be openly known. Then, sir, he said, my name is Gareth, and brother unto Sir Gawaine of father and mother. Ah, sir, said Sir Launcelot, I am more gladder of you than I was; for ever me thought ye should be of great blood, and that ye came not to the court neither for meat nor for drink. And then Sir Launcelot gave him the order of knighthood, and then Sir Gareth prayed him for to depart and let him go. So Sir Launcelot departed from him and came to Sir Kay, and made him to be borne home upon his shield, and so he was healed hard with the life; and all men scorned Sir Kay, and in especial Sir Gawaine and Sir Launcelot said it was not his part to rebuke no young man, for full little knew he of what birth he

is come, and for what cause he came to this court; and so we leave Sir Kay and turn we unto Beaumains. When he had overtaken the damosel, anon she said, What dost thou here? thou stinkest all of the kitchen, thy clothes be bawdy of the grease and tallow that thou gainest in King Arthur's kitchen; weenest thou, said she, that I allow thee, for yonder knight that thou killest. Nay truly, for thou slewest him unhappily and cowardly; therefore turn again, bawdy kitchen page, I know thee well, for Sir Kay named thee Beaumains. What art thou but a luske and a turner of broaches and a ladle-washer? Damosel, said Beaumains, say to me what ye will, I will not go from you whatsomever ye say, for I have undertaken to King Arthur for to achieve your adventure, and so shall I finish it to the end, either I shall die therefore. Fie on thee, kitchen knave, wilt thou finish mine adventure? thou shalt anon be met withal, that thou wouldest not for all the broth that ever thou suppest once look him in the face. I shall assay, said Beaumains. So thus as they rode in the wood, there came a man flying all that ever he might. Whither wilt thou? said Beaumains. O lord, he said, help me, for here by in a slade are six thieves that have taken my lord and bound him, so I am afeard lest they will slay him. Bring me thither, said Beaumains. And so they rode together until they came thereas was the knight bounden; and then he rode unto them, and struck one unto the death, and then another, and at the third stroke he slew the third thief,

Beaumains fights with six thieves

and rescues a knight

and then the other three fled. And he rode after them, and he overtook them; and then those three thieves turned again and assailed Beaumains hard, but at the last he slew them, and returned and unbound the knight. And the knight thanked him, and prayed him to ride with him to his castle there a little beside, and he should worshipfully reward him for his good deeds. Sir, said Beaumains, I will no reward have: I was this day made knight of noble Sir Launcelot, and therefore I will no reward have, but God reward me. And also I must follow this damosel. And when he came nigh her she bade him ride from her, For thou smellest all of the kitchen: weenest thou that I have joy of thee, for all this deed that thou hast done is but mishapped thee: but thou shalt see a sight shall make thee turn again, and that lightly. Then the same knight which was rescued of the thieves rode after that damosel, and prayed her to lodge with him all that night. And because it was near night the damosel rode with him to his castle, and there they had great cheer, and at supper the knight sat Sir Beaumains afore the damosel. Fie, fie, said she, Sir knight, ye are uncourteous to set a kitchen page afore me; him beseemeth better to stick a swine than to sit afore a damosel of high parage. Then the knight was ashamed at her words, and took him up, and set him at a sideboard, and set himself afore him, and so all that night they had good cheer and merry rest.

CHAPTER VI. How Beaumains fought and slew two knights at a passage. And on the morn the damosel and he took their leave and thanked the knight, and so departed, and rode on their way until they came to a great forest. And there was a great river and but one passage, and there were ready two knights on the farther side to let them the passage. What sayest thou, said the damosel, wilt thou match yonder knights or turn again? Nay, said Sir Beaumains, I will not turn again an they were six more. And therewithal he rushed into the water, and in middes of the water either brake their spears upon other to their hands, and then they drew their swords, and smote eagerly at other. And at the last Sir Beaumains smote the other upon the helm that his head stonied, and therewithal he fell down in the water, and there was he drowned. And then he spurred his horse upon the land, where the other knight fell upon him, and brake his spear, and so they drew their swords and fought long together. At the last Sir Beaumains clave his helm and his head down to the shoulders; and so he rode unto the damosel and bade her ride forth on her way. Alas, she said, that ever a kitchen page should have that fortune to destroy such two doughty knights: thou weenest thou hast done doughtily, that is not so; for the first knight his horse stumbled, and there he was drowned in the water, and never it was by thy force, nor by thy might. And the last knight by mishap thou camest behind him and mishappily thou

He slays two knights

He meets the Knight of the Black Laundes

slew him. Damosel, said Beaumains, ye may say what ye will, but with whomsomever I have ado withal, I trust to God to serve him or he depart. And therefore I reck not what ye say, so that I may win your lady. Fie, fie, foul kitchen knave, thou shalt see knights that shall abate thy boast. Fair damosel, give me goodly language, and then my care is past, for what knights somever they be, I care not, nor I doubt them not. Also, said she, I say it for thine avail, yet mayest thou turn again with thy worship; for an thou follow me, thou art but slain, for I see all that ever thou dost is but by misadventure, and not by prowess of thy hands. Well, damosel, ye may say what ye will, but wheresomever ye go I will follow you. So this Beaumains rode with that lady till evensong time, and ever she chid him, and would not rest. And they came to a black launde; and there was a black hawthorn, and thereon hung a black banner, and on the other side there hung a black shield, and by it stood a black spear great and long, and a great black horse covered with silk, and a black stone fast by.

CHAPTER VII. How Beaumains fought with the Knight of the Black Laundes, and fought with him till he fell down and died. There sat a knight all armed in black harness, and his name was the Knight of the Black Laundes. Then the damosel, when she saw that knight, she bade nim flee down that valley, for his horse was not saddled. Gramercy,

He fights with him

said Beaumains, for always ye would have me a coward. With that the Black Knight, when she came nigh him, spake and said, Damosel, have ye brought this knight of King Arthur to be your champion? Nay, fair knight, said she, this is but a kitchen knave that was fed in King Arthur's kitchen for alms. Why cometh he, said the knight, in such array? it is shame that he beareth you company. Sir, I cannot be delivered of him, said she, for with me he rideth maugre mine head: God would that ye should put him from me, outher to slay him an ye may, for he is an unhappy knave, and unhappily he hath done this day: through mishap I saw him slay two knights at the passage of the water; and other deeds he did before right marvellous and through unhappiness. That marvelleth me, said the Black Knight, that any man that is of worship will have ado with him. They know him not, said the damosel, and for because he rideth with me, they ween that he be some man of worship born. That may be, said the Black Knight; howbeit as ye say that he be no man of worship, he is a full likely person, and full like to be a strong man: but thus much shall I grant you, said the black knight; I shall put him down upon one foot, and his horse and his harness he shall leave with me, for it were shame to me to do him any more harm. When Sir Beaumains heard him say thus, he said, Sir knight, thou art full large of my horse and my harness; I let thee wit it cost thee nought, and whether it liketh thee or not, this launde will I pass maugre thine

and slays him

head. And horse nor harness gettest thou none of mine, but if thou win them with thy hands; and therefore let see what thou canst do. Sayest thou that? said the Black Knight, now yield thy lady from thee, for it beseemeth never a kitchen page to ride with such a lady. Thou liest, said Beaumains, I am a gentleman born, and of more high lineage than thou, and that will I prove on thy body. Then in great wrath they departed with their horses, and came together as it had been the thunder, and the black knight's spear brake, and Beaumains thrust him through both his sides, and therewith his spear brake, and the truncheon left still in his side. But nevertheless the black knight drew his sword, and smote many eager strokes, and of great might, and hurt Beaumains full sore. But at the last the black knight, within an hour and an half, he fell down off his horse in swoon, and there he died. And when Beaumains saw him so well horsed and armed, then he alit down and armed him in his armour, and so took his horse and rode after the damosel. When she saw him come nigh, she said, Away, kitchen knave, out of the wind, for the smell of thy bawdy clothes grieveth me. Alas, she said, that ever such a knave should by mishap slay so good a knight as thou hast done, but all this is thine unhappiness. But here by is one shall pay thee all thy payment, and therefore yet I counsel thee, flee. It may happen me, said Beaumains, to be beaten or slain, but I warn you, fair damosel, I will not flee away, nor leave your company, for all that ye can say;

for ever ye say that they will kill me or beat me, but howsomever it happeneth I escape, and they lie on the ground. And therefore it were as good for you to hold you still thus all day rebuking me, for away will I not till I see the uttermost of this journey, or else I will be slain, outher truly beaten; therefore ride on your way, for follow you I will whatsomever happen.

He meets the Green Knight

CHAPTER VIII. How the brother of the knight that was slain met with Beaumains, and fought with Beaumains till he was yielden. Thus as they rode together, they saw a knight come driving by them all in green, both his horse and his harness; and when he came nigh the damosel, he asked her, Is that my brother the black knight that ye have brought with you? Nay, nay, she said, this unhappy kitchen knave hath slain your brother through unhappiness. Alas, said the green knight, that is great pity, that so noble a knight as he was should so unhaply be slain, and namely of a knave's hand, as ye say that he is. Ah! traitor, said the green knight, thou shalt die for slaying of my brother; he was a full noble knight, and his name was Sir Percard. I defy thee, said Beaumains, for I let thee wit I slew him knightly and not shamefully. Therewithal the green knight rode unto an horn that was green, and it hung upon a thorn, and there he blew three deadly notes, and there came two damosels and armed him lightly. And then he took a great horse, and a green shield and a green spear. And then they ran

They fight together with all their mights, and brake their spears unto their hands. And then they drew their swords, and gave many sad strokes, and either of them wounded other full ill. And at the last at an overthwart Beaumains with his horse struck the green knight's horse upon the side, that he fell to the earth. And then the green knight avoided his horse lightly, and dressed him upon foot. That saw Beaumains, and therewithal he alit, and they rushed together like two mighty kempes a long while, and sore they bled both. With that came the damosel, and said, My lord the green knight, why for shame stand ye so long fighting with the kitchen knave? Alas, it is shame that ever ye were made knight, to see such a lad to match such a knight, as the weed overgrew the corn. Therewith the green knight was ashamed, and therewithal he gave a great stroke of might, and clave his shield through. When Beaumains saw his shield cloven asunder he was a little ashamed of that stroke and of her language; and then he gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell on his knees. And so suddenly Beaumains pulled him upon the ground grovelling. And then the green knight cried him mercy, and yielded him unto Sir Beaumains, and prayed him to slay him not. All is in vain, said Beaumains, for thou shalt die but if this damosel that came with me pray me to save thy life. And therewithal he unlaced his helm like as he would slay him. Fie upon thee, false kitchen page, I will never pray thee to save his life, for I will never be so much in

hy danger. Then shall he die, said Beaumains. Not so hardy, thou bawdy knave, said the damosel, that thou slay him. Alas, said the green knight, suffer me not to die for a fair word may save me. Fair knight, said the green knight, save my life, and I will forgive thee the death of my brother, and for ever to become thy man, and thirty knights that hold of me for ever shall do you service. In the devil's name, said the damosel, that such a bawdy kitchen knave should have thee and thirty knights' service. Sir knight, said Beaumains, all this availeth thee not, but if my damosel speak with me for thy life. And therewithal he made a semblaunt to slay him. Let be, said the damosel, thou bawdy knave; slay him not, for an thou do thou shalt repent it. Damosel, said Beaumains, your charge is to me a pleasure, and at your commandment his life shall be saved, and else not. Then he said, Sir knight with the green arms, I release thee quit at this damosel's request, for I will not make her wroth, I will fulfil all that she chargeth me. And then the green knight kneeled down, and did him homage with his sword. Then said the damosel, Me repenteth, green knight, of your domage, and of your brother's death, the black knight, for of your help I had great mister, for I dread me sore to pass this forest. Nay, dread you not, said the green knight, for ye shall lodge with me this night, and to-morn I shall help you through this forest. So they took their horses and rode to his manor, which was fast there beside.

Beaumains overcomes him

The damosel rebukes Beaumains

CHAPTER IX. How the damosel again rebuked Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table, but called him kitchen boy. And ever she rebuked Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table, but as the green knight took him and sat him at a side table Marvel methinketh, said the green knight to the damosel, why ye rebuke this noble knight as ye do, for I warn you, damosel, he is a full noble knight, and I know no knight is able to match him; therefore ye do great wrong to rebuke him, for he shall do you right good service, for whatsomever he maketh himself, ye shall prove at the end that he is come of a noble blood and of king's lineage. Fie, fie, said the damosel, it is shame for you to say of him such worship. Truly, said the green knight, it were shame for me to say of him any disworship, for he hath proved him-himself a better knight than I am, yet have I met with many knights in my days, and never or this time have I found no knight his match. And so that night they yede unto rest, and all that night the green knight commanded thirty knights privily to watch Beaumains, for to keep him from all treason. And so on the morn they all arose, and heard their mass and brake their fast; and then they took their horses and rode on their way, and the green knight conveyed them through the forest; and there the green knight said, My lord Beaumains, I and these thirty knights shall be always at your summons, both early and late, at your calling and whither that ever ye will send us. It is well said, said

Beaumains; when that I call upon you ye must yield you unto King Arthur, and all your knights. If that ye so command us, we shall be ready at all times, said the green knight. Fie, fie upon thee, in the devil's name, said the damosel, that any good knights should be obedient unto a kitchen knave. So then departed the green knight and the damosel. And then she said unto Beaumains, Why followest thou me, thou kitchen boy? Cast away thy shield and thy spear, and flee away; yet I counsel thee betimes or thou shalt say right soon, alas; for wert thou as wight as ever was Wade or Launcelot, Tristram, or the good knight Sir Lamorak, thou shalt not pass a pass here that is called the Pass Perilous. Damosel, said Beaumains, who is afeared let him flee, for it were shame to turn again sithen I have ridden so long with you. Well, said the damosel, ye shall soon, whether ye will or not.

who continues to ride with her

CHAPTER X. How the third brother, called the red knight, jousted and fought against Beaumains, and how Beaumains overcame him. So within a while they saw a tower as white as any snow, well matchecold all about, and double dyked. And over the tower gate there hung a fifty shields of divers colours, and under that tower there was a fair meadow. And therein were many knights and squires to behold, scaffolds and pavilions; for there upon the morn should be a great tournament: and the lord of the tower was in his castle and looked out at a window, and

Beaumains fights with the Red Knight

saw a damosel, a dwarf, and a knight armed at all points. So God me help, said the lord, with that knight will I joust, for I see that he is a knight-errant. And so he armed him and horsed him hastily. And when he was on horseback with his shield and his spear, it was all red both his horse and his harness, and all that to him longeth. And when that he came nigh him he weened it had been his brother the black knight; and then he cried aloud, Brother, what do ye in these marches? Nay, nay, said the damosel, it is not he; this is but a kitchen knave that was brought up for alms in King Arthur's court. Nevertheless, said the Red Knight, I will speak with him or he depart. Ah, said the damosel, this knave hath killed thy brother, and Sir Kay named him Beaumains, and this horse and this harness was thy brother's, the black knight. Also I saw thy brother the green knight overcome of his hands. Now may ye be revenged upon him, for I may never be quit of him. With this either knights departed in sunder, and they came together with all their might, and either of their horses fell to the earth, and they avoided their horses, and put their shields afore them and drew their swords, and either gave other sad strokes, now here, now there, racing, tracing, foining, and hurling like two boars, the space of two hours. And then she cried on high to the red knight, Alas, thou noble red knight, think what worship hath followed thee, let never a kitchen knave endure thee so long as he doth. Then the red knight waxed

wroth and doubled his strokes, and hurt Beaumains wonderly sore, that the blood ran down to the ground, that it was wonder to see that strong battle. Yet at the last Sir Beaumains struck him to the earth, and as he would have slain the red knight, he cried mercy, saying, Noble knight, slay me not, and I shall yield me to thee with fifty knights with me that be at my commandment. And I forgive thee all the despite that thou hast done to me, and the death of my brother the black knight. All this availeth not, said Beaumains, but if my damosel pray me to save thy life. And therewith he made semblaunt to strike off his head. Let be, thou Beaumains, slay him not, for he is a noble knight, and not so hardy upon thine head but thou save him. Then Beaumains bade the red knight, Stand up, and thank the damosel now of thy life. Then the red knight prayed him to see his castle, and to be there all night. So the damosel then granted him, and there they had merry cheer. But always the damosel spake many foul words unto Beaumains, whereof the red knight had great marvel; and all that night the red knight made three score knights to watch Beaumains, that he should have no shame nor villainy. And upon the morn they heard mass and dined, and the red knight came before Beaumains with his three score knights, and there he proffered him his homage and fealty at all times, he and his knights to do him service. I thank you, said Beaumains, but this ye shall grant me: when I call upon you, to come afore

and overcomes him

Beaumains' further adventures

my lord King Arthur, and yield you unto him to be his knights. Sir, said the red knight, I will be ready and my fellowship at your summons. So Sir Beaumains departed and the damosel, and ever she rode chiding him in the foulest manner.

CHAPTER XI. How Sir Beaumains suffered great rebukes of the damosel, and he suffered it patiently. Damosel, said Beaumains, ye are uncourteous so to rebuke me as ye do, for meseemeth I have done you good service, and ever ye threaten me I shall be beaten with knights that we meet, but ever for all your boast they lie in the dust or in the mire, and therefore I pray you rebuke me no more; and when ye see me beaten or yielden as recreant, then may ye bid me go from you shamefully; but first I let you wit I will not depart from you, for I were worse than a fool an I would depart from you all the while that I win worship. Well, said she, right soon there shall meet a knight shall pay thee all thy wages, for he is the most man of worship of the world, except King Arthur. I will well, said Beaumains, the more he is of worship, the more shall be my worship to have ado with him. Then anon they were ware where was afore them a city rich and fair. And betwixt them and the city a mile and an half there was a fair meadow that seemed new mown, and therein were many pavilions fair to behold. Lo, said the damosel, yonder is a lord that owneth yonder city, and his custom is when

the weather is fair to lie in this meadow to joust and tourney. And ever there be about him five hundred knights and gentlemen of arms, and there be all manner of games that any gentleman can devise. That goodly lord, said Beaumains, would I fain see. Thou shalt see him time enough, said the damosel, and so as she rode near she espied the pavilion where he was. Lo, said she, seest thou yonder pavilion that is all of the colour of Inde, and all manner of thing that there is about, men and women, and horses trapped, shields and spears were all of the colour of Inde, and his name is Sir Persant of Inde, the most lordliest knight that ever thou lookedst on. It may well be, said Beaumains, but be he never so stout a knight, in this field I shall abide till that I see him under his shield. Ah, fool, said she, thou wert better flee betimes. Why, said Beaumains, an he be such a knight as ye make him, he will not set upon me with all his men, or with his five hundred knights. For an there come no more but one at once, I shall him not fail whilst my life lasteth. Fie, fie, said the damosel, that ever such a stinking knave should blow such a boast. Damosel, he said, ye are to blame so to rebuke me, for I had liefer do five battles than so to be rebuked, let him come and then let him do his worst. Sir, she said, I marvel what thou art and of what kin thou art come; boldly thou speakest, and boldly thou hast done, that have I seen; therefore I pray thee save thyself an thou mayest, for thy horse and thou have had great travail, and I dread we dwell over

Sir Persant of Inde

The damosel asks forgiveness of Beaumains

long from the siege, for it is but hence seven mile, and all perilous passages we are passed save all only this passage; and here I dread me sore lest ye shall catch some hurt, therefore I would ye were hence, that ye were not bruised nor hurt with this strong knight. But I let you wit that Sir Persant of Inde is nothing of might nor strength unto the knight that laid the siege about my lady. As for that, said Sir Beaumains, be it as it be may. For sithen I am come so nigh this knight I will prove his might or I depart from him, and else I shall be shamed an I now withdraw me from him. And therefore, damosel, have ye no doubt by the grace of God I shall so deal with this knight that within two hours after noon I shall deliver him. And then shall we come to the siege by daylight. O Jesu, marvel have I, said the damosel, what manner a man ye be, for it may never be otherwise but that ye be come of a noble blood, for so foul nor shamefully did never woman rule a knight as I have done you, and ever courteously ye have suffered me, and that came never but of a gentle blood. Damosel, said Beaumains, a knight may little do that may not suffer a damosel, for whatsomever ye said unto me I took none heed to your words, for the more ye said the more ye angered me, and my wrath I wreaked upon them that I had ado withal. And therefore all the missaying that ye missaid me furthered me in my battle, and caused me to think to show and prove myself at the end what I was; for peradventure though I had meat in King Arthur's kitchen, yet I might

have had meat enough in other places, but all that I did it for to prove and assay my friends, and that shall be known another day; and whether that I be a gentleman born or none, I let you wit, fair damosel, I have done you gentleman's service, and peradventure better service yet will I do or I depart from you. Alas, she said, fair Beaumains, forgive me all that I have missaid or done against thee. With all my heart, said he, I forgive it you, for ye did nothing but as ye should do, for all your evil words pleased me; and damosel, said Beaumains, sine it liketh you to say thus fair unto me, wit ye well it gladdeth my heart greatly, and now meseemeth there is no knight living but I am able enough for him.

They meet Sir Persant of Inde

CHAPTER XII. How Beaumains fought with Sir Persant of Inde, and made him to be yielden. With this Sir Persant of Inde had espied them as they hoved in the field, and knightly he sent to them whether he came in war or in peace. Say to thy lord, said Beaumains, I take no force, but whether as him list himself. So the messenger went again unto Sir Persant and told him all his answer. Well then will I have ado with him to the utterance, and so he purveyed him and rode against him And Beaumains saw him and made him ready, and there they met with all that ever their horses might run, and brast their spears either in three pieces, and their horses rushed so together that both their horses fell dead to the earth; and lightly they avoided

Beaumains fights with Sir Persant

their horses and put their shields afore them, and drew their swords, and gave many great strokes that sometime they hurtled together that they fell grovelling on the ground. Thus they fought two hours and more, that their shields and their hauberks were all forhewen, and in many steads they were wounded. So at the last Sir Beaumains smote him through the cost of the body, and then he retrayed him here and there, and knightly maintained his battle long time. And at the last, though him loath were, Beaumains smote Sir Persant above upon the helm, that he fell grovelling to the earth; and then he leapt upon him overthwart and unlaced his helm to have slain him. Then Sir Persant yielded him and asked him mercy. With that came the damosel and prayed to save his life. I will well, for it were pity this noble knight should die. Gramercy, said Persant, gentle knight and damosel. For certainly now I wot well it was ye that slew my brother the black knight at the black thorn; he was a full noble knight, his name was Sir Percard. Also I am sure that ye are he that won mine other brother the green knight, his name was Sir Pertolepe. Also ye won my brother the red knight, Sir Perimones. And now sine ye have won these, this shall I do for to please you: ye shall have homage and fealty of me, and an hundred knights to be always at your commandment, to go and ride where ye will command us. And so they went unto Sir Persant's pavilion and drank the wine, and ate spices, and afterward

and overcomes him

Sir Persant made him to rest upon a bed until supper time, and after supper to bed again. When Beaumains was abed, Sir Persant had a lady, a fair daughter of eighteen year of age, and there he called her unto him, and charged her and commanded her upon his blessing to go unto the knight's bed, and lie down by his side, and make him no strange cheer, but good cheer, and take him in thine arms and kiss him, and look that this be done, I charge you, as ye will have my love and my good will. So Sir Persant's daughter did as her father bade her, and so she went unto Sir Beaumains' bed, and privily she dispoiled her, and laid her down by him, and then he awoke and saw her, and asked her what she was. Sir, she said, I am Sir Persant's daughter, that by the commandment of my father am come hither. Be ye a maid or a wife? said he. Sir, she said, I am a clean maiden. God defend, said he, that I should defoil you to do Sir Persant such a shame; therefore, fair damosel, arise out of this bed or else I will. Sir, she said, I came not to you by mine own will, but as I was commanded. Alas, said Sir Beaumains, I were a shameful knight an I would do your father any disworship; and so he kissed her, and so she departed and came unto Sir Persant her father, and told him all how she had sped. Truly, said Sir Persant, whatsomever he be, he is come of a noble blood. And so we leave them there till on the morn.

The siege at Castle Dangerous

CHAPTER XIII. Of the goodly communication between Sir Persant and Beaumains, and how he told him that his name was Sir Gareth. And so on the morn the damosel and Sir Beaumains heard mass and brake their fast, and so took their leave. Fair damosel, said Persant, whitherward are ye way-leading this knight? Sir, she said, this knight is going to the siege that besiegeth my sister in the Castle Dangerous. Ah, ah, said Persant, that is the Knight of the Red Launde, the which is the most perilous knight that I know now living, and a man that is without mercy, and men say that he hath seven men's strength. God save you, said he to Beaumains, from that knight, for he doth great wrong to that lady, and that is great pity, for she is one of the fairest ladies of the world, and meseemeth that your damosel is her sister: is not your name Linet? said he. Yea, sir, said she, and my lady my sister's name is Dame Lionesse. Now shall I tell you, said Sir Persant, this Red Knight of the Red Launde hath lain long at the siege, well-nigh this two years, and many times he might have had her an he had would, but he prolongeth the time to this intent, for to have Sir Launcelot du Lake to do battle with him, or Sir Tristram, or Sir Lamorak de Galis, or Sir Gawaine, and this is his tarrying so long at the siege. Now my lord Sir Persant of Inde, said the damosel Linet, I require you that ye will make this gentleman knight or ever he fight with the red knight. I will with all my

heart, said Sir Persant, an it please him to take the order of knighthood of so simple a man as I am. Sir, said Beaumains, I thank you for your good will, for I am better sped, for certainly the noble knight Sir Launcelot made me knight. Ah, said Sir Persant, of a more renowned knight might ye not be made knight; for of all knights he may be called chief of knighthood; and so all the world saith, that betwixt three knights is departed clearly knighthood, that is Launcelot du Lake, Sir Tristram de Liones, and Sir Lamorak de Galis: these bear now the renown. There be many other knights, as Sir Palamides the Saracen and Sir Sasere his brother; also Sir Bleoberis and Sir Blamore de Ganis his brother; also Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Percivale de Galis; these and many more be noble knights, but there be none that pass that four above said; therefore God speed you well, said Sir Persant, for an ye may match the red knight ye shall be called the fourth of the world. Sir, said Beaumains, I would fain be of good fame and of knighthood. And I let you wit I came of good men, for I dare say my father was a noble man, and so that ye will keep it in close, and this damosel, I will tell you of what kin I am. We will not discover you, said they both, till ye command us, by the faith we owe unto God. Truly then, said he, my name is Gareth of Orkney, and King Lot was my father, and my mother is King Arthur's sister, her name is Dame Morgawse, and Sir Gawaine is my brother, and Sir Agravaine and

Beaumains discovers himself

Beaumains' deeds recounted

Sir Gaheris, and I am the youngest of them all. And yet wot not King Arthur nor Sir Gawaine what I am.

CHAPTER XIV. How the lady that was besieged had word from her sister how she had brought a knight to fight for her, and what battles he had achieved. So the book saith that the lady that was besieged had word of her sister's coming by the dwarf, and a knight with her, and how he had passed all the perilous passages. What manner a man is he? said the lady. He is a noble knight, truly, madam, said the dwarf, and but a young man, but he is as likely a man as ever ye saw any. What is he? said the damosel, and of what kin is he come, and of whom was he made knight? Madam, said the dwarf, he is the king's son of Orkney, but his name I will not tell you as at this time; but wit ye well, of Sir Launcelot was he made knight, for of none other would he be made knight, and Sir Kay named him Beaumains. How escaped he, said the lady, from the brethren of Persant? Madam, he said, as a noble knight should. First, he slew two brethren at a passage of a water. Ah! said she, they were good knights, but they were murderers, the one hight Gherard de Breuse, and the other knight hight Sir Arnold de Breuse. Then, madam, he recountered with the black knight, and slew him in plain battle, and so he took his horse and his armour and fought with the green knight and won him in plain battle, and in like wise he served the red

knight, and after in the same wise he served the blue knight and won him in plain battle. Then, said the lady, he hath overcome Sir Persant of Inde, one of the noblest knights of the world, and the dwarf said, He hath won all the four brethren and slain the black knight, and yet he did more tofore: he overthrew Sir Kay and left him nigh dead upon the ground; also he did a great battle with Sir Launcelot, and there they departed on even hands: and then Sir Launcelot made him knight. Dwarf, said the lady, I am glad of these tidings, therefore go thou in an hermitage of mine hereby, and there shalt thou bear with thee of my wine in two flagons of silver, they are of two gallons, and also two cast of bread with fat venison baked, and dainty fowls; and a cup of gold here I deliver thee, that is rich and precious; and bear all this to mine hermitage, and put it in the hermit's hands. And sithen go thou unto my sister and greet her well, and commend me unto that gentle knight, and pray him to eat and to drink and make him strong, and say ye him I thank him of his courtesy and goodness, that he would take upon him such labour for me that never did him bounty nor courtesy. Also pray him that he be of good heart and courage, for he shall meet with a full noble knight, but he is neither of bounty, courtesy, nor gentleness; for he attendeth unto nothing but to murder, and that is the cause I cannot praise him nor love him. So this dwarf departed, and came to Sir Persant, where he found the damosel Linet and Sir Beaumains, and there he told them all as ye

Dame Lionesse sends greeting to Beaumains

The Red Knight of the Red Laundes

have heard; and then they took their leave, but Sir Persant took an ambling hackney and conveyed them on their ways, and then beleft them to God; and so within a little while they came to that hermitage, and there they drank the wine, and ate the venison and the fowls baken. And so when they had repasted them well, the dwarf returned again with his vessel unto the castle again; and there met with him the Red Knight of the Red Laundes, and asked him from whence that he came, and where he had been. Sir, said the dwarf, I have been with my lady's sister of this castle, and she hath been at King Arthur's court, and brought a knight with her. Then I account her travail but lost; for though she had brought with her Sir Launcelot, Sir Tristram, Sir Lamorak, or Sir Gawaine, I would think myself good enough for them all. It may well be, said the dwarf, but this knight hath passed all the perilous passages, and slain the black knight and other two more, and won the green knight, the red knight, and the blue knight. Then is he one of these four that I have afore rehearsed. He is none of those, said the dwarf, but he is a king's son. What is his name? said the red knight of the red laundes. That will I not tell you, said the dwarf, but Sir Kay upon scorn named him Beaumains. I care not, said the knight, what knight so ever he be, for I shall soon deliver him. And if I ever match him he shall have a shameful death as many other have had. That were pity, said the dwarf, and it is marvel that ye make such shameful war upon noble knights.

CHAPTER XV. How the damosel and Beaumains came to the siege, and came to a sycamore tree, and there Beaumains blew a horn, and then the knight of the red laundes came to fight with him. Now leave we the knight and the dwarf, and speak we of Beaumains, that all night lay in the hermitage; and upon the morn he and the damosel Linet heard their mass and brake their fast. And then they took their horses and rode throughout a fair forest; and then they came to a plain, and saw where were many pavilions and tents, and a fair castle, and there was much smoke and great noise; and when they came near the siege Sir Beaumains espied upon great trees, as he rode, how there hung full goodly armed knights by the neck, and their shields about their necks with their swords, and gilt spurs upon their heels, and so there hung nigh a forty knights shamefully with full rich arms. Then Sir Beaumains abated his countenance and said, What meaneth this? Fair sir, said the damosel, abate not your cheer for all this sight, for ye must courage yourself, or else ye be all shent, for all these knights came hither to this siege to rescue my sister Dame Lionesse, and when the Red Knight of the Red Laundes had overcome them, he put them to this shameful death without mercy and pity. And in the same wise he will serve you but if you quit you the better. Now Jesu defend me, said Beaumains, from such a villainous death and shenship of arms. For rather than I should so be faren withal, I would rather be slain manly in plain battle. So

Beaumains comes to the siege

He blows the horn

were ye better, said the damosel; for trust not, in him is no courtesy, but all goeth to the death or shameful murder, and that is pity, for he is a full likely man, well made of body, and a full noble knight of prowess, and a lord of great lands and possessions. Truly, said Beaumains, he may well be a good knight, but he useth shameful customs, and it is marvel that he endureth so long that none of the noble knights of my lord Arthur's have not dealt with him. And then they rode to the dykes, and saw them double dyked with full warlike walls; and there were lodged many great lords nigh the walls; and there was great noise of minstrelsy; and the sea beat upon the one side of the walls, where were many ships and mariners' noise with 'hale and how.' And also there was fast by a sycamore tree, and there hung an horn, the greatest that ever they saw, of an elephant's bone; and this Knight of the Red Laundes had hanged it up there, that if there came any errant-knight, he must blow that horn, and then will he make him ready and come to him to do battle. But, sir, I pray you, said the damosel Linet, blow ye not the horn till it be high noon, for now it is about prime, and now increaseth his might, that as men say he hath seven men's strength. Ah, fie for shame, fair damosel, say ye never so more to me; for, an he were as good a knight as ever was, I shall never fail him in his most might, for either I will win worship worshipfully, or die knightly in the field. And therewith he spurred his horse straight to the sycamore tree, and blew so the

horn eagerly that all the siege and the castle rang thereof. And then there leapt out knights out of their tents and pavilions, and they within the castle looked over the walls and out at windows. Then the Red Knight of the Red Laundes armed him hastily, and two barons set on his spurs upon his heels, and all was blood red, his armour, spear and shield. And an earl buckled his helm upon his head, and then they brought him a red spear and a red steed, and so he rode into a little vale under the castle, that all that were in the castle and at the siege might behold the battle.

and calls the Red Knight to battle

NOTE

The present text of Sir Thomas Malory's '*noble and ioyous book entitled* le morte Darthur' *is substantially that printed by* Caxton, '*and finished in* th' Abbey *of* Westminster *the last day of Juyl the year of our Lord* MCCCCLXXXV,' *except in so far as its spelling and punctuation have been modernised. By the fairly consistent retention of archaisms (verbal, grammatical, and syntactical) it is hoped that a somewhat successful compromise has been effected between an absolute reproduction of the 'editio princeps' and a thorough modernisation. As little as possible of the charm of the original edition has been sacrificed; its typographical characteristics and vagaries of spelling are not for the general reader, and they may now be studied in Dr. Sommer's excellent reprint* (David Nutt, 1889); *they do not constitute any part of the abiding interest in the famous book.*

For the literary history of 'Le Morte Darthur' *the reader is referred to the* 'Bibliographical Note' *at the end of Volume IV.*

I. G.

TWELFTH NIGHT,
1897.

GLOSSARY

abate, cast down.
accorded, agreed, reconciled.
acquit, requite.
advised him, deliberated with himself.
afeared, afraid.
afterdele, disadvantage.
alit, alighted.
allowed, praised.
alther, of all; 'our a.,' of us all.
an, if.
ancient men, old, aged men.
anon, immediately.
appertices, feats, dexterities.
approved, tried.
araged, enraged.
armyvestal, (?) martial, fierce; or perhaps, solemn, grave (? earnestful, '*arnystal*').
arrayment, garments.
arson, saddle-bow.
as, like.
assotted, besotted, doted on.
astonied, stunned.
at arms! to arms!
avail, advantage.
avaled, lowered.
aventred, couched (spoken of a spear).
avoid, quit, leave.
avow, vow.
awke, backward, back-handed.
awroke, avenged.

barbican, an outwork of a fort.
battle, battalion.
bawdy, dirty.
be-bled, covered with blood
behote, promise.
beleft, left.
bereaved, taken from.
besaunte, a golden coin, so called because first coined at Byzantium or Constantinople.
beseen, provided, appointed.
beskifte, thrust off, get rid of.
bestead; 'hard b.,' badly circumstanced, in hard plight.
bestial, cattle.
betaken, handed over, intrusted.
betaught, commended.
betook, intrusted.
bevered, trembled.
bledde, be-bled.
bole, tree-trunk.
boot, remedy.
bow-draught, the distance a bow will carry.
boyshe, bush, bough.
boystous, boisterous, cross-grained, rough.
brachet, hound.
brast, burst, broke.
breathed, took breath, rested for breath.
broached, thrust.
broaches, spits.
brose, a kind of broth or pottage.
bushment, ambush.
but if, except.

canel bone, collar-bone.
cantel, a small piece or portion of anything.
carved, cut.
cast, a set of loaves baked together.
cease, cause to cease.
cere, to wrap in cere-clothes, waxed shrouds.
certes, certainly.
cheer, entertainment.
——, bearing, demeanour.
chrism, holy oil.
churl, fellow.
clean, noble.
cleight, clutched, seized.
cogge, cock-boat.
complished, complete.
comyral, common.
con, know, be able.
conceit, thought, knowledge.
concluded, determined.
cording, accord, agreement.
coronal, spear-head.
cost, rib.
courtelage, garden or court-yard.
cousin, consanguineous.
covenant, condition.
credence, statement, report.
curteist, most courteous.

damosel, damsel.
danger, dominion, power.
deal, part.
default, fault.
defend, prevent, refuse.
defoiled, overcome, shattered.
defouled, defiled.
delibered, resolved, determined, deliberated.
departed, parted.
despite, spite.
devoided, left, quitted.
did do (*write*, *etc.*), caused to be (written, etc.).
dight, decked.
dindled, shook.
discover, betray.
disherited, disinherited.
dispenses, expenses.
disperpled, scattered.
disport, sport.
disworship, dishonour.
dole, sorrow.
domineth, dominates.
domage, harm, injury.
done, gift.
do off, doff, take off.
doubted, feared.
dressed, got ready, directed, poised.
dretched, harassed.
dromoundes, vessels of war.
dure, last, live.
dwell, tarry.

embattled, drawn up in battle array.
embushment, ambush.
enewed, tinted, shaded.
enow, enough.
ensample, example.
entreated, treated.
errant knights, wandering knights.
espy, spy.
estates, ranks.
eure, fortune.
every each, every one.

faiter, deceiver, rogue.
fall, befall, chance.
faren, conditioned.
fast, quickly.
fawte, fail, want.
fellowship, company.
ferd, became, behaved.
feute, track.
feuter, a rest for the spear.

feutred, fixed in rest.
fiance, faith, assurance.
flang out, drew out quickly.
flayed off, stripped off.
foining, thrusting.
for, on account of, for fear of.
forborne, spared.
force; 'take no f.,' make no account, care not.
fordele, advantage.
fordo, destroy.
forfared, ruined, perished utterly.
forfoughten, worn out with fighting.
forhewn, hewn all to pieces.
forthinketh; 'me f.,' it repenteth me, I regret.
forthwithal, forthwith.
froward, from.

garte, caused.
gerfalcon, a kind of large hawk.
germain, akin.
give; 'give you that,' adjudge.
glaive, sword.
God would, would to God.
governance, charge, care.
graithed, prepared.
grame, sorrow.
gramercy, great thanks.
gree, prize, victory.
grimly, grim.
gysarms, bills or battle-axes.

halsing, embracing.
harbour, harbourage, shelter.
hardiness, hardihood, bravery.
harness, armour.
hasty, urgent.
hauberk, coat of mail.
heaviness, sorrow.
heavy, sad.
hew, hewed.
hight, was called.
hilled, wrapped, enveloped.
hoar, hoary.
holden, beholden.
holts, woods.
hove, hover, tarry.
hoving, moving.
hurtle, clash.

incontinent, immediately.
incoronation, coronation.
Inde, dark blue.
intent, purpose.

japes, jests.
jeopard, jeopardise.
jesseraunte, cuirass.
jousts (commonly for 'joust'), encounter on horseback.

kempes, warriors.
kind, nature.
kirtle, upper garment, tunic.

largeness, liberality.
laton, a mixed metal, a kind of brass or bronze.
launde, plain.
learn, teach.
leeches, physicians.
leman, lover, mistress.
let, hinder.
letted, hindered.
lewdest, foulest.
lie, lodge, dwell.
lief, dear, welcome.
liefer, more gladly.
——, rather.
liegiance, allegiance.
lithe, joint.
long; 'or it be l. to,' ere long.
long, belong.
longed, belonged.

longeth, belongeth.
longing, belonging.
look, give heed, take care.
loos, renown.
lusk, idle lout.
lust, desire, inclination.

mails, coats of mail.
makeles, without a match, peerless.
march, to border on.
marches, borders, frontiers.
matchecold, furnished with projecting galleries.
maugre, in spite of.
maugre mine head, despite my wishes.
meiny, retinue.
me list, I please.
meseemeth, it seems to me.
mishapped, chanced by mishap.
mishappily, unhappily.
missay, abuse, revile.
missaying, abuse.
mister, need.
more liker, more like.
most, greatest.
motes, notes on a horn or trumpet.
mountenance, amount.

namely, especially.
nighted, benighted.
nill, will not.
nis, is not.
noblesse, nobility, nobleness.

obeissance, dominion.
of, for, by, on, at.
oftsides, ofttimes.
one, alone, singly.
or, ere.
ordain, order, arraign.
orgulous, proud.
other-else, otherwise.
ought, owned, possessed, belonged.
outrageousity, outrage.
outward, outwardly.
overthwart, across.

painture, device.
paltockes, doublets.
parage, lineage, rank.
pareil, equal, like
parties, sides.
parts, sides.
passing, surpassing.
——, exceedingly.
pight, pitched.
plenour, fully.
plomb, plumb, block.
point, tag, lace.
potestate, chief magistrate.
precessors, predecessors.
pretendeth, pertaineth.
priker, squire.
prise, a note on the horn in hunting.
promise; 'my p.,' *i.e.* the promise made to me.
purfle, trimming.
purfled, trimmed.
purvey, provide.

quest, search, inquiry, inquest.
questing, chasing, barking.
quick, alive.
quit, requited.

raged, enraged.
range; 'fetch his r.,' take up his position.
ransack, search thoroughly.
rased off, cut off.
raseth, chafes.
rashing, *rasing*, slashing, cutting (particularly applied to the stroke given by a boar).

undon, onrush, force.
ared, raised,
commend, commend.
counter, encounter.
de, counsel.
igned on, reigned over.
quire, entreat.
trayed, drew back.
warded, awarded.
ghtwise, rightly.
med, bellowed.
ve, split, tore.
wnsepyk, a tree beginning to decay at the top from age.

lly, heavily.
mite, rich silk stuff.
ngreal, Holy Grail.
tthe, injure, harm.
ipture, writing.
mly, noble.
nblable, comparable, equal.
nblaunt, semblance.
ndal, a kind of rich, thin silken stuff.
night, seven nights, a week.
ted, followed.
nship, disgrace, ruin.
nt, discomfited, destroyed.
orted, shortened.
rve, pushed, thrust drove along.
*', akin.
ges, seats, places.
erness, security.
h, since.
de, valley.
ke, ravine.
netime, once.
inging, dawn.
le, state, station, position.
rk, gross, absolute.

stede, place.
stered, moved, stirred.
sterte, started, sprang.
steven, opportunity.
stint, cease.
stoned, battered, crushed.
stonied, stunned.
stour, battle.
stuff, to store with all necessaries.
suppose, propose.
sweven, dream.
sworn brother, close companion.
swough, sough, sound, noise.

take, betake, go.
tallies, taxes.
tamed, battered, crushed.
tatches, defects, qualities, dispositions.
taught, directed.
tene, grief.
thereafter, accordingly.
thereas, where.
therewithal, therewith.
thilk, that same.
threst, did thrust.
thrice, triple.
throughout, through.
thwart, athwart, across.
to-brast, burst, broke to pieces (*to* intensive prefix).
tofore, before.
to-held, held.
to-morn, to-morrow morning.
to-riven, torn to pieces.
to-rushed, shattered.
to-shivered, shivered to pieces.
tray, sorrow.
trasing, *tracing*, checking, harassing (a hunting term for checking the dogs when too forward).
treatise, treaty.

trenchant, cutting, sharp.
truage, homage.
trumpets, trumpeters.

uncouth, strange, not akin.
unhap, misfortune.
unnailed, unfastened.
unnethe, unnethes, scarcely.
up-so-down, up-side-down.
utas, the eighth day, or the space of eight days, after any festival.
utterance, utmost; 'to the u.,' = *à l'outrance*, to the utmost.

valiances, valours.
void, empty, spare.
villain, churl, peasant.

wage, pay.
wait, take care, watch, observe.
wallop, gallop.
ware, aware.
warn, prevent.
way-leading (?), leading away.
weltered, tumbled about.
what, whatever.
what so, whatsoever.
whereby, why, wherefore.
whether, which of the two.
wholesome, good.
wight, brave, valiant.
wise, manner.
wite, blame.
with, by.
withholden, retained, held.
witting, knowledge.
woe worth, evil befall, evil be to.
wonderly, exceedingly.
woodness, madness.
worship, honour.
worth, worthy.
wot, I know.
wroken, wreaked.
wrung, twisted about.
yede, yode, went.
yolden, yielded, surrendered

END OF VOL. I.

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty at the Edinburgh University Press

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